Football Premiership: Manchester United 3 Leeds United 2

Reds rise to Ferguson's challenge

David Hopps

ALEX FERGUSON had unmistakably thrown down the challenge last Sunday, warning that he would be "examining in every detail the attitudes and standards" of a Manchester United side whose Premiership challenge has been undermined too often by the rival attractions of the Champions League.

Even such notably hard taskmasters can purr with delight on occasions, and Ferguson was delighted by this response. There is no more passionate challenge to United than that provided by their rivals from across the Pennines. They had to stretch every sinew, burst every lung before victory was achieved.

This was Leeds's Nou Camp. Manchester United might have gained plaudits for a thrilling midweek draw in Barcelona, but Leeds sensed the opportunity to cause further embarrassment to a side whose Premiership lapses, according to Ferguson, had been "unacceptable". The manager having drawn the line, his players defended it to the last man; they had to.

Only 12 minutes remained of an enthralling contest when Manchester United summoned the goal that swept them back into second place, Aston Villa's lead now only a point.

Appropriately it fell to Nicky Butt, the sort of fringe senior player at whom Ferguson's words had been directed, his first goal of the season coming as he swivelled just inside the area to beat Paul Robinson with a rasping drive. "He has had a mixed season but today he was our best player," Ferguson said. "It was a fantastic result for us, and the most entertaining game I've ever known against Leeds at Old Trafford."

Leeds, finally, were spent, but their first away defeat in the Premiership this season brought upon them considerable credit, as they were disturbed defensively by injuries to Martin Hiden, who may be absent for a month with knee ligament trouble, and to their goalkeeper Nigel Martyn.

Butt had looked in disbelief at the best of these saves: with the game still goalless, Martyn leapt prodigiously to claw his header on to the bar, sustaining a back injury as he fell on to his far post.

In Ferguson's search for "freshness" this was a United side with their wings clipped: no David Beckham, no Jesper Blomqvist, and Ryan Giggs appearing only as a second-half substitute. Leeds drew encouragement, tackling ferociously in central areas and breaking in numbers, their strikers Harry Kewell and Jimmy Floyd Hasselbaink back to their sharpest.

Leeds survived Ole Gunnar Solskjaer's appeals for a penalty when he fell under Gunnar Halle's challenge, before Hasselbaink provided them with a half-hour lead. The latter, entirely unrecognisable from the crabby, flabby figure of a few weeks ago, drove determinedly in from the left and his powerful shot careered into the net off the inside of the near post.

Martyn winced in pain at every drop kick, patted balls at his feet into touch in near despair and saved excellently from Solskjaer and Cole in between swigging down a couple of painkillers hurried round by his manager, David O'Leary. His last duty, though, was to pick the ball from the net, Solskjaer receiving Dwight Yorke's pass to beat him with a low, angled drive.

For Martyn to survive the half was one thing, to emerge for the restart practically impossible. He gave way to his teenage understudy, Robinson, who through no fault of his own was beaten within 10 seconds of the restart, Roy Keane sidefooting into the roof of the net after Paul Scholes had sped outside Ian Harte.

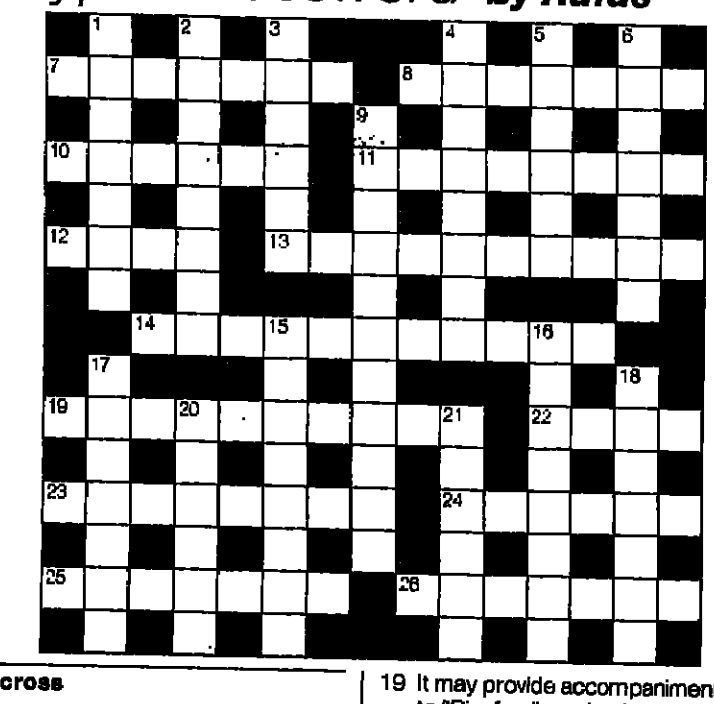
That Leeds could summon another response in the face of such mounting casualties seemed unlikely, but within six minutes they were level.

Kewell, full of vim throughout, capitalised upon an error by Wes Brown and his left-foot finish over Schmeichel was delightfully composed. Robinson's saves then kept Leeds alive until the moment that brought Butt's season alive.



Manchester United's Dwight Yorke congratulates goalscorer Ole Gunnar Solskjaer PHOTO: NEAL SIMPSON

Cryptic crossword by Rufus



Across

7 Shout out various numbers during course of test (7)
8 As result of special deal, English railway passed through another station (7)
10 Key operators may strike against it (6)
11 Lois died broke but greatly admired (8)
12 Time that is right for a row (4)
13 Spot cash the bookmakers must be prepared to pay out (5,5)
14 Intrigued at form of non-appreciation (11)
19 It may provide accompaniment to "Pinafore" production (10)
22 Undreamt of money (4)
23 Dude pals prepare to ride on the ranch (6,2)
24 Cats in the pound (6)
25 La Costa resort by the sea (7)
26 Left Spain for somewhere in Africa (7)

Down

1 To give reasons is no longer simple (7)
2 Pressing need for home club (8)
3 Billy has hot tip, might make gangster's fortune (6)
4 Suggestive of European river rising fast (8)
5 Where people make pots on a wheel? (6)
6 Intriguing woman had her face painted (7)
9 Martin hopes to mix, the very thing he hates (11)
15 Firm, lean sort of fighting man (8)
16 Upset caused by greed and corruption (8)
17 One may be mounted in a ring (7)
18 She's a real swinger in Paris life (7)
20 It sounds bad — not so, he's in the pink (6)
21 Strange noises affecting Greece and Cyprus (6)

Last week's solution

P	O	P	U	L	A	C	E		W	A	Y	O	U	T
A		R		E		A				B		G		O
T	H	E	S	A	U	R	I		S	A	C	R	U	M
I		C		S		T		M		N		E		E
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E	I	D	E	R		L	I	E	I	N	W	A	I	T
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Tennis ATP Tour Championship

Corretja fights to the finish

Stephen Bierley in Hanover

THIS all-Spanish ATP Tour Championship final between Alex Corretja and Carlos Moya, a re-run of this year's French Open, was an extraordinary contest. Moya had more than half won the match before Corretja staged a remarkable comeback and went on to win 3-6, 3-6, 7-5, 6-3, 7-5.

Moya's dashing good looks, shoulder-length hair, baggy clothing and huge paddle feet are more than enough to single him out on any court, yet it is the quality of his shots, notably a searing forehand, the intensity of his serve and his athleticism which suggested that here was a Spaniard for all seasons and surfaces.

His straight-sets victory over Corretja at Roland Garros had been a largely bloodless affair, the two men embracing each other and talking of their undying friendship. This time, having beaten Britain's Tim Henman in the semi-final, Moya warned: "I will have no friend. I'm going to fight to the death."

Perhaps he should have kept his mouth shut, for it was Corretja, the shock semi-final winner over the world's No 1 Sampras, who fought to the death, dropping to his knees at the close. Moya sank on his chair and tried to comprehend the incomprehensible. It was a defeat that for months to come will sorely trouble the 22-year-old Spaniard, the youngest in the eight-man field.

Unlike Moya, Corretja is not a charismatic figure, but like the former he has taught himself to play on hard courts and indoors by sheer application.

The victory here made him the first player to win the event, formerly the Masters, at the first attempt since John McEnroe 20 years ago. That Corretja saved three match points against Sampras should have warned Moya of his impending fate. "Alex is hitting the ball real heavy," said Sampras. For Moya the blows were sledgehammers.

Corretja ends the year as the world's No 3, behind Sampras and Chile's Marcelo Rios, with Moya at No 5.

Henman meanwhile finishes the season at No 7, his highest yet, with Greg Rusedski at No 9. Both left here considerably richer, Henman by $315,000 and Rusedski by $272,000.

Both Britons will face the new year with considerable confidence, the Wimbledon title being their prime objective. But what would they — and particularly Henman — give now for a quarter-share of Corretja's staying power.

The Guardian Weekly

Vol 159, No 24
Week ending December 13, 1998

The Washington Post

Israel faces meltdown over peace deal

David Sharrock in Jerusalem

ISRAEL'S prime minister, Binyamin Netanyahu, won a two-week reprieve from a crucial parliamentary confidence vote after frantic negotiations on Monday that increased the prospect of a change in the government.

Fighting to stay in office just days before President Clinton arrives to try to revitalise the peace process between Israel and the Palestinians, Mr Netanyahu was told that he must decide either to form a national unity government or to call early general elections.

The power-broker behind this deal, conducted during hours of filibustering in the Knesset by Netanyahu allies, was Aryeh Deri, leader of the ultra-Orthodox Shas party — Israel's fastest-growing political movement.

As the domestic political scene approached meltdown, violence erupted for the fourth day in the West Bank. A Palestinian student related to Yasser Arafat's chief negotiator in the peace process, Saeb Erekat, was shot and declared clinically dead in hospital, while a Jewish settler was shot and injured near the largely Arab city of Jenin.

The violence and the fraught political situation are casting an ugly shadow over President Clinton's planned three-day visit this weekend. The visit was meant to reinforce the international community's determination to see Israel and the Palestinians implement the land-for-security deal reached in October at the Wye plantation in Maryland.

But a hunger strike by 2,000 Palestinian prisoners in protest at Israel's failure to free Arab political prisoners has made the tense atmosphere worse, with Israelis and Palestinians trading ever more incendiary threats.

Nasser Erekat, a 22-year-old student at the West Bank's Bir Zeit university, was pronounced clinically dead at al-Makassed hospital in East Jerusalem on Monday night. He had been shot in the head during a demonstration in Abu Dis, southern Jerusalem. Another protester was hit in the hip.

In the northern West Bank city of Nablus, Palestinian police shot and wounded 11 Arabs in a crowd that tried to storm their headquarters. The protesters had set fire to two police cars and a bus after being beaten back from the Israeli enclave of Joseph's Tomb during a rally in support of prisoners.

Israel's political turmoil, created by the gaping divisions in Mr Netanyahu's coalition over the Wye deal — which is supposed to return a further 13 per cent of the West Bank to the Palestinians in return for a crackdown on Islamic extremists — has put into doubt the schedule of Mr Clinton's visit, due to begin on Saturday.

Mr Netanyahu's woes deepened after he failed to strengthen his government by enticing a former foreign minister, David Levy, back into the cabinet and bolstering his meagre Knesset majority of 61-59. But Mr Levy turned him down, and the opposition Labour party — which removed its "safety net" after Mr Netanyahu announced last week that he was suspending implementation of the Wye agreement because of alleged Palestinian misdemeanours — was confident it had enough votes to defeat the government.

After Monday night's deal, which sets back the confidence vote by 14 days, Mr Deri said: "Over the next two weeks they [Mr Netanyahu and the Labour leader, Ehud Barak] should decide whether to get together to form a national unity government or call elections."

Palestinian youths fire catapults at Israeli soldiers during clashes in Bethlehem PHOTOGRAPH: SANTIAGO LYON

Washington Post, page 15

Impeachment hangs over Clinton's head

Martin Kettle in Washington

BILL CLINTON is facing an increasingly uphill battle to avoid impeachment after a key Republican leader dug in against allowing a vote of censure against the president in the House of Representatives.

Congressman Tom DeLay of Texas, the whip for the Republican majority in the 435-member House, said this week that a censure vote would be "a terrible precedent" and should be kept off the agenda when the House votes on impeachment.

Mr DeLay's move came days before the House judiciary committee is expected to draft at least one article of impeachment against Mr Clinton, based on the Monica Lewinsky affair, in an increasingly uncompromising political atmosphere in Washington.

The censure compromise is under assault after Mr Clinton, in answers to 81 questions from the committee last week, angered Republicans and dismayed a few Democrats by refusing to retreat from his long-standing denial of lawbreaking in his relations with the former White House intern.

That leaves the increasing probability that the issue will come down to a straight congressional shootout on impeachment in the coming week, with only a handful of votes deciding the majority either way.

Mr DeLay wants to tighten the screws on the group of Republican waverers who favour censure, including a fine levied on Mr Clinton.

The Republicans have a 228-207 majority in the outgoing House, which means that 11 Republicans would need to vote with all the Democrats and the lone independent to prevent Mr Clinton facing the ignominy of a Senate trial.

Washington Post, page 16

Door opens for first steps in human cloning

Sarah Boseley

A REPORT this week that will allow British scientists to take the first steps down the road of human cloning is likely to draw widespread protest.

The Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority (HFEA) and the Human Genetics Advisory Commission (HGAC) have been consulting on the ethics of cloning since January. On Tuesday they published their conclusions, firmly opposing the cloning of a human child in place of the normal means of reproduction, but leaving the door open for cloning human material for therapeutic purposes.

Scientists and ethicists have been pondering the possibilities with increased urgency ever since Dolly, the cloned sheep, was created nearly two years ago.

The HFEA/HGAC wants to anticipate what may be possible in 10 years' time so that the debate will precede the technology. The report proposes leaving the door open, but insists that scientists will have many hurdles to cross if they seek permission to experiment in this area.

It expects to be asked to permit the cloning of an embryo of perhaps eight to 10 days' growth. The procedure would be to remove a cell from the skin of a human being and fuse its nucleus into a human egg from which the nucleus has been removed. The embryo would develop in a test tube to the point where a line of stem cells — the basic cells which have the potential to become any part of the human body, whether brain, kidney or leg — have developed. The material could then be frozen and stored for later use.

Medical opinion is in favour of proceeding with cloning in the hope of helping the sufferers of diseases such as Parkinson's.

Sir Colin Campbell, chairman of the HGAC, said: "We believe it would not be right at this stage to rule out limited research using such techniques, which could be of great benefit to seriously ill people."

The greatest advantage to cloned material is that it will not be rejected by the body from which the original cell was taken. Some scientists in the forefront of the field talk of the potential for developing "spare body parts" — the possibility of cells being removed from babies at birth, to be cloned, developed into stem cells, and then stored against the day when needed for a replacement organ, such as a kidney or a heart.

The anti-cloning lobby is appalled that the HFEA will not stop further experimentation. Patrick Dixon, a leading anti-cloning campaigner, said the HFEA's report would be "a Christmas present for cloners around the world".

"Human clones will be created in British labs," he predicted, and would-be cloners of new human beings, such as Richard Seed in the United States, would be able to profit from the research.

Austria	AS30	Malta	50c
Belgium	BF80	Netherlands	G 5
Denmark	DK17	Norway	NK 16
Finland	FM 10	Portugal	E300
France	FF 14	Saudi Arabia	SR 6.50
Germany	DM 4.50	Spain	P 300
Greece	DR 500	Sweden	SK 19
Hungary	HUF 500	Switzerland	SF 3.80
Italy	L 3,500		

Aid agencies must learn to stop spreading misery

ACCORDING to World Bank chief economist Joseph Stiglitz, aid can benefit countries with sound policies and institutions (Target aid where it will do good, November 22).

The problem is that the countries which need aid most to stimulate growth and reduce poverty are the countries most lacking these attributes. Arguably, poor countries with sound policies and institutions do not need more aid. What they need is more private investment. Aid breeds corruption, complacency and a dependent mentality among recipients.

Mr Stiglitz mentions Uganda, India, Bolivia and Vietnam as countries which could benefit from more financial aid. These countries all figure in the bottom 20 per cent of a recent corruption poll by Transparency International.

Arguably, Vietnam's recent growth is the result of foreign investment, not the quality of its institutions, which remain unaccountable, bureaucratic and corrupt. More financial aid to these countries will offer incentives to more corruption, not more reform.

Mr Stiglitz asks why lending countries do not simply stop giving aid to countries with bad policies. Why only target lending countries? The World Bank has by far the worst record of lending to countries lacking sound institutions, including former development models such as Indonesia, where $20 billion of past Bank loans are still unaccounted for.

Debt is a major hindrance to growth and development. Most poor country debt is the result of unsound loans from lending institutions, particularly the World Bank, which have fuelled corruption and, it could be argued, helped to prevent market reforms.

More than a decade of structural adjustment lending has shown that meaningful policy reform cannot be bought, yet aid agencies continue to lend and grant money on promises of future reform rather than on proven commitments.

It is not news that there is little relationship between the distribution of aid and the quality of countries' policies. Until we can improve the lending policies, this cycle of loans, debts and more loans may continue indefinitely. The donor agencies are as much in need of institutional reform as their development partners.

A cynic might reformulate Mr Stiglitz's question "when does aid work best?" to "when does aid do the least harm?" Perhaps aid agencies should not impose policy conditions on aid but instead limit their assistance to building and maintaining economic infrastructure. If they do not like the policies of a particular country, they can always take their aid elsewhere.
(Dr) Brian Cooksey,
Dar es Salaam, Tanzania

Pinochet should be sent home

NOW that the Lords have established that, henceforth, torture can under no circumstances form part of the functions of any government, the immediate issue about General Pinochet is not what would satisfy men and women on the British left (Straw faces a fateful decision, December 6). It is what would be best for a still endangered democracy in Chile.

The regretful but considered view among leaders of the Chilean left, including survivors who were in office in 1970-73, is that the return of an inevitably discredited and humiliated Pinochet would do the least harm to the chances of democratic progress in their country. This is also the view expressed to me by a very authoritative democratic figure in neighbouring Argentina. May I add that I have just returned from Santiago where, sitting beside President Allende's widow, I had the luck to see with what joy the televised judgment of the law lords was received.
Eric Hobsbawm,
London

I AM entirely in agreement with your editorial that if the Chilean government feels that Pinochet is fit and well enough to stand trial in Chile, he is fit and well enough to stand trial anywhere else.

Chile was "democratised" on terms dictated by the military, a so-called "protected democracy". The balance of forces in Chile between the military and the civilian government has been, and still is, tilted towards the military, unlike in Argentina where defeat in the Malvinas war left the military humiliated and weak. Former president Raul Alfonsin was able to prosecute the former dictators in civil courts, breaking a centuries-old tradition of the military only being tried in military courts.

In Chile the military is in a much more powerful position, and it will doubtless insist on its historic prerogative to try Pinochet in its own military courts. We can safely assume that if this were to happen the military would close ranks, whitewash its bloody record, and thwart any possibility of justice being done.
(Dr) Christopher Erswell,
Sale, Cheshire

Confused view of Latvia's past

AS AN Englishman who has lived in Latvia for the past three-and-a-half years I was happy to see a "Letter from Latvia" (November 22) — one more step in putting this little country on the map.

Unfortunately Jacqueline Karp Gendre filled her head with misconceptions, and then travelled to Latvia determined to find them. She gave herself away with the remark, "I knew my Baltics in advance", as if that justified the absurd idea that a lift operator greets customers with a fascist salute. She "gasps" to discover an old man standing near the Freedom Monument with a swastika under his jacket. For sure such people exist, but what has this got to do with reporting life in modern Latvia? It is as relevant as finding an old Black Shirt standing near the Cenotaph in Whitehall.

Then she tells us that Latvia and other Baltic states "turned for help to Hitler". This is insulting nonsense to all three Baltic states. Hitler was not invited. He invaded. And nobody "enrolled" in the SS. In saying this, Ms Gendre is simply perpetuating myths — like the more recent one of Riga as a city ravaged by a spate of anti-Russian bombings.

The errors continue. She tells us that the central market was built to "house Zeppelins". Does she seriously believe there was a plan to park Zeppelins in the centre of the city? Or did she just misread her travel guide?

She looks for optimism in the view of the future expressed by Prime Minister Guntis Ulmanis. But he is not the prime minister. He is the president. The office of the prime minister is currently changing hands following election results.

Latvia's confused and tragic history has left it with many problems. The country's achievements since regaining independence in 1991 is truly remarkable, and has been done peacefully. Further progress is not helped by respected Western journals publishing half-baked, misinformed rubbish.
Ian Tervit,
Riga, Latvia

Assessing US nuclear policy

WHETHER or not financial considerations encourage the United States to reduce its stockpiles of nuclear warheads (Pentagon to trim nuclear arsenal, November 29), the warheads will soon start disabling themselves anyway as one important component, tritium, decays at 5.5 per cent a year. The reactors which produced this gas were closed in 1988, and stocks of tritium will be too low to sustain the current weapons inventory beyond 2005 or so.

One option under consideration is the production of tritium in one to three civilian light water reactors. However, that is a politically difficult route to follow, given the US stance on civilian facilities in other parts of the world which could have military uses.

Another alternative would be the construction of a dedicated accelerator at a cost of $2.5 billion or so, which would maintain the separation between military and civilian use. The US Department of Energy has been researching alternative sources of tritium since 1993, and is running out of time.

It seems to me that US intentions for the coming decades can be assessed simply by monitoring the construction or otherwise of facilities capable of producing tritium over the next few years: at the moment, the gas controls US nuclear policy.
Paul Hardy,
Tokyo, Japan

Briefly

JOHN RYLE (No relief from the disasters of war, November 29) is wrong to say that Hurricane Mitch and the floods in Central America are a natural disaster that could not have been prevented.

Some argue that global warming, caused by excessive carbon dioxide production, makes such storms more frequent and devastating.

Without doubt the effect of the storms is made far worse by changing agricultural patterns and deforestation. Forested hills prevent mudslides and slow down the water run-off, hence reducing flooding. So the next time we use our car or something made from rainforest timber, we should think about the possible consequences of our actions.
David Trubridge,
Havelock North, New Zealand

DAVID I MARKS (November 8) wonders what the following remark by Steven Poole in a review of James Kelman's The Good Times (August 9) means: "Meanwhile one militant aim of Kelman's language is probably to deconstruct sanitary deliminations of literary register as being class-based prejudice."

It means three things: that everyday speech, which ranges widely depending on social situation, is restricted (by "clean" boundaries) in literature, that this false distinction is class-created, and that a probable (and strong) purpose of Kelman's writing is to eliminate the distinction. But it also means that Poole prefers pomposity to clarity, a vice common among bad writers.
Jeffrey Sievert,
Nara, Japan

REVIEWING John Fowles's Wormholes (November 29), Peter Conrad says: "[Fowles] dottily insists that Homer was female ..."

For the record, the view that The Odyssey was written by a female author was first advanced by the distinguished writer and Homer translator Samuel Butler. When a writer such as Fowles expresses opinions on literary matters, the prudent reviewer thinks twice before labelling them as dotty.
Derek Brearley,
Taipei, Taiwan

AS A regular reader of the Guardian Weekly, I continue to enjoy the Country Diary column. However, I must point out that Vernon Mullen (November 15) is incorrect when he ascribed a white mask to the male Common Yellowthroat — he has a black mask which would be more appropriate to a bird nicknamed the "Highwayman."
Dieter Gump,
South Burlington, Vermont, USA
● *The typesetting error was ours, not Vernon Mullen's. Apologies — Editor*

The **Guardian Weekly**

December 13, 1998 Vol 159 No 24

Annual subscription rates are £52 United Kingdom; £58 Europe inc. Eire, USA and Canada; £66 Rest of World.
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Subscription, change of address and e-mail inquiries to: gwsubs@guardian.co.uk

Iranian moderates form new party

Genelve Abdo in Tehran

PRESIDENT Mohammed Khatami and his loyalists took a significant step last weekend towards institutionalising their reformist movement by establishing a political party aimed at countering their conservative rivals.

More than 100 leading political figures and senior officials set up the Islamic Iran Participation Front.

They include the president's two brothers; the vice-president for environmental affairs, Masoumeh Ebtekar; and four ministers, one of them the highest ranking woman in the Khatami cabinet, the presidential adviser on women's affairs, Zahra Shojei.

The party plans to put up candidates in the elections to city and town councils due in February — polls which are expected to be the most democratic in post-revolutionary Iran.

The president's name did not appear among the signatories of the party announcement, but the list reads like a Who's Who of the Khatami camp. Its members included a leading film-maker and other cultural figures benefiting from the current cultural thaw.

"On the verge of the third decade of the revolution, we have decided to form this party to enhance freedom and democracy and to improve understanding among the people," the Front said in its first communiqué, published last week.

The timing of the announcement was no accident. In recent weeks, conservatives have openly confronted Mr Khatami's programme — a civil society based on the rule of law — with violence and political manoeuvring.

The most brazen challenge was an attack last month on a tourist bus carrying American corporate executives and their spouses.

No one was injured, but the delegation fled Iran the following day, as conservative newspapers claimed they were spies. The incident caused much embarrassment to Mr Khatami, who came to power with a landslide victory in 1997 based on a promise to restore law and order.

● Medical rules guaranteeing privacy for women are about to take effect in Iran. Female patients will soon be treated by women paramedics, able to buy personal items from women pharmacists, and rest in hospital wards free of male intrusion. Critics argue that many women will lose out because in certain fields, such as neurology and brain science, there are far more male doctors than female.

Yeltsin leaves sick bed to sack old ally

Tom Whitehouse in Moscow

PRESIDENT Boris Yeltsin began desperate preparations for a hassle-free retirement this week by sacking his most loyal ally, the Kremlin chief of staff, Valentin Yumashev. The ailing Russian leader dumped Mr Yumashev to curry favour with the presidential candidate he apparently thinks most able to protect him from future legal inquiries: Yuri Luzhkov, the mayor of Moscow.

Popping out of hospital for three hours, Mr Yeltsin went to the Kremlin to sack Mr Yumashev, before returning to continue his convalescence from pneumonia.

Regarded as "the son Yeltsin never had", Mr Yumashev, a 40-year-old former tabloid journalist, has stood by the president since his wilderness years in the late 1980s. After helping him to write his memoirs, he became a virtual member of the first family.

He and Mr Yeltsin's daughter, Tatiana, have been the president's closest advisers and main conduits with the outside world during his long and frequent bouts of illness.

But since making a show of support for Mr Luzhkov's rivals — the former prime minister Viktor Chernomyrdin and the influential tycoon Boris Berezovsky fortunes have declined rapidly. Both Mr Chernomyrdin and Mr Berezovsky were badly damaged by the economic and political fallout from the rouble's collapse. Mr Luzhkov suffered less, and is now in a much stronger position to succeed Mr Yeltsin.

Mr Yumashev has been replaced by the secretary of the presidential Security Council, Nikolai Bordyuzha. Three of his deputies were also sacked.

Speaking in Bonn, Mr Luzhkov welcomed the changes in the Kremlin administration, saying they "would weaken the position of individual oligarchs".

With his political career in tatters, Mr Yeltsin needs to make a deal with a successor whom he can trust not to launch vengeful investigations into his murky business affairs. Mr Luzhkov is his best hope.

Ex-coup plotter wins Venezuela poll

Christina Hoag in Caracas

THE former military officer who tried to overthrow the Venezuelan democratic government in 1992 was overwhelmingly elected president last Sunday, achieving with ballots what he failed to do with bullets.

Hugo Chávez took 56.5 per cent of the vote, while his closest rival, the Yale-educated economist and former state governor Henrique Salas Romer, won 39.5 per cent.

As soon as the official results were announced, supporters took to the streets all around the country chanting "Chá-vez! Chá-vez!" and setting off fireworks in celebration. Thousands thronged the centre of the capital, Caracas, waiting several hours until Mr Chávez's car passed by.

Although Mr Chávez was widely predicted to win, many thought it would have been by a narrower margin, especially after the country's two leading parties, Democratic Action and Social Christian Copei, jettisoned their candidates and threw their support behind Mr Salas just days before the election.

The unprecedented move by the two parties, which have controlled Venezuelan politics and the presidency during the past 40 years of democracy under a power-sharing pact, was seen as a measure of how much Mr Chávez has shaken up the system.

"These are historic elections," the United States ambassador, John Maisto, said. "Nothing like these elections has happened in Venezuela's political history."

The 1981 Miss Universe, Irene Saez, who was the favourite to win a year ago before she accepted the



Chávez supporters celebrate victory PHOTO. JOSE CARUCI/ANDRES LEIGHTON

distant third place with only 3.1 per cent of the vote.

After the victory was announced, Mr Chávez said that he accepted his victory with "humility" and that he felt it was his destiny. "We won this battle before it started ... Today the national soul is being reborn," he said. "This is the start of a new Venezuela."

Mr Chávez, a firebrand orator who wears the red military beret he wore during the coup attempt against then-president, Carlos Andres Pérez, campaigned on an anti-corruption, populist-nationalist platform that delighted Venezuela's nerved the business community and foreign investors.

He promises radical change, including a referendum on a new constitution, in a country where 70 per cent of the population live in poverty, despite the nation's vast oil wealth.

Mr Salas, on the other hand, was seen as an élitist who did not promise sufficient change.

"I like Chávez, because he's the only person who's made the corrupt politicians tremble in 40 years," said José Manuel Gomez. "It's not going to be the same old story of Democratic Action and Copei divvying up the cake. I'm voting this time

Chirac and Blair seal new defence pact

Richard Norton-Taylor

BRITAIN and France are to step up co-operation on defence and security issues as part of an attempt to make the European Union a more credible diplomatic and military force. Tony Blair and Jacques Chirac announced a series of measures, including joint military and diplomatic responses to international crises, at last week's Anglo-French summit in St Malo.

Britain and France were the two European countries "with most in common" in the defence field, British officials said. They singled out future cooperation in Africa where the two governments have frequently disagreed over policy.

They also emphasised the need for EU states to go it alone in peace-keeping and military operations when the United States was loath to commit its forces.

The British defence secretary, George Robertson, who met his French counterpart, Alain Richard, in Paris last week, said that European countries needed to play a fuller role in contributing towards their own security.

Kosovo had shown there was more Europe could do in a crisis. If recent planned air strikes had gone ahead, less than a third of the Nato aircraft involved would have been European, he told a meeting of the Western European Union.

In Nato as a whole, Mr Robertson added, the European countries made up 60 per cent of the population but provided only 40 per cent of the defence spending.

However, the Foreign Office stressed that while the Anglo-French summit emphasised general principles as well as practical co-operation, there were no plans to set up any new European defence or security institutions.

Mr Blair has made it clear that close European military co-operation must not weaken Nato. France's more independent stance within Nato, its reluctance to let French arms companies merge with British ones, and Britain's close intelligence links with the US, have all been potential barriers to close defence links between the two countries.

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The Week

THE decapitated bodies of three Britons and one New Zealander, who were taken hostage in Chechenia in October, were found on the breakaway Russian republic's border with Ingushetia.

A MEDICAL technician from Illinois, Brian Stewart, aged 32, was convicted of injecting his son with HIV-tainted blood in an attempt to kill him and thus avoid child support payments.

POLICE in China detained two leading dissidents, Xu Wenli and Qin Yongmin, in a crackdown which may signal the end of tolerance towards pro-democracy campaigners.
Washington Post, page 15

THE Indonesian president, B J Habibie, ordered legal proceedings against his predecessor General Suharto.

TENS of thousands of Christians gathered in New Delhi to protest against what Indian Church leaders called the most concerted campaign of persecution since the country became independent.

BULENT Ecevit, who served as Turkey's prime minister three times in the 1970s, has been asked to form the country's next government after the previous administration fell under the weight of corruption allegations. His party holds just 10 per cent of the seats in parliament.
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THE United States has put a price of up to $5 million on the heads of the top Bosnian Serb war crime suspects Radovan Karadzic and Ratko Mladic, according to reports in Washington.

PAVLO Lazarenko, the former prime minister of Ukraine, was charged with money laundering in Switzerland.

A FIRE swept through an orphanage in Manila killing 28 people, mostly children.

US SCIENTISTS said they had discovered an icecap, consisting partly of frozen carbon dioxide, at Mars's north pole. The Martian pole is now mapped in more detail than parts of Greenland and Antarctica.

NIGERIA'S centrist People's Democratic party won a huge lead over its rivals in local elections, emerging as the dominant force in the military's plan to restore civilian rule.

CESAR Baldaccini, one of France's leading sculptors, has died aged 77.

SENATOR Albert Gore, the father of the American vice-president, has died aged 90.

Libya hints at early Lockerbie trial

Ian Black in London and Nick Pelham in Tripoli

LIBYA could hand over the Lockerbie bombing suspects in the next few days, the British Foreign Secretary, Robin Cook, said after Kofi Annan's talks with Muammar Gadafy last weekend.

Mr Cook spoke of "qualified optimism" that the two men could be in custody by December 21, the 10th anniversary of the worst terrorist incident in British history.

But Libya sent out mixed signals, with its official news agency warning that the timeframe was not reasonable, and quoting the country's foreign ministry as saying that a solution was closer after last weekend's "fruitful" talks.

Two hundred and seventy people died on Pan Am flight 103 and on the ground in the Scottish border town in December 1988.

With the surrender of two alleged intelligence officers now on the table for a five-day annual session of Libya's General People's Congress, which starts this week, the stage seems set for confusion. There will be increased pressure on Colonel Gadafy from African and Arab leaders anxious to end the affair.

Last weekend as Western leaders waited for results, the UN chief and his entourage were kept waiting in the freezing cold before being driven across the desert to near Sirte. Mr Annan, his host and an interpreter met in a giant tent warmed by bonfires.

After 90 minutes with the Libyan leader, Mr Annan said a solution to the problem "will require time, but not an inordinate amount of time".

Mr Cook said after talking to Mr Annan that he was "very encouraged". "I think you can sum up our mood as one of qualified optimism," he said.

Diplomats revealed that the Libyan leader had appeared to accept Mr Annan's assurances that the US and Britain had no hidden agenda in pressing to bring the suspects to trial under Scottish law in the Netherlands.

Col Gadafy had also been persuaded that UN sanctions, imposed because of Libya's refusal to hand over Abdel Baset al-Megrahi and Al-Amin Khalifah Fhimah when they were indicted in 1991, would be suspended and effectively lifted as soon as the men landed in the Netherlands.

But he continued to object to what London and Washington insist is their non-negotiable demand that if convicted the two men serve their sentences in Scotland.

Experts believe Col Gadafy is manoeuvring to protect his regime from exposure of high-level complicity in terrorism. But London and Washington have repeatedly signalled that if the Libyan leader sacrificed two relatively junior officers that would be the end of the story and the beginning of rehabilitation for one of their "pariah" states.

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When a little river turned into a torrent

TEGUCIGALPA DIARY
Phil Gunson

THE smaller of Tegucigalpa's two rivers, the appropriately named Río Chiquito (little river), describes a tight S-bend around what must be one of the world's least secure prisons, Honduras's Penitenciaría Central. Just across what is normally a muddy trickle of a stream is the house I once lived in: 403 Segunda Calle.

One morning a few weeks ago a flurry of shots alerted the neighbours to the latest escape bid by the prisoners on the opposite bank. "It was like the Wild West over there," said Myrna Aguiluz. One prisoner was killed, but for Myrna and her neighbours the jail break was the least of their worries.

Not since Hurricane Fifi in 1974 had the Río Chiquito — whose worst offence normally was an unappealing odour and an occasional floating dead dog — looked so menacing. Fifi was a garden party compared with Mitch. But no one had any idea how bad it was going to get.

Myrna's daughter Ofelia María, who works in the British embassy, left with some suitcases, to be on the safe side. Myrna went to the supermarket, leaving her other daughter, journalist Myrna María, on her own.

Upstream a dam, formed by rocks and trees swept down in the flood, suddenly burst. A huge wave rushed down the Río Chiquito, and in seconds No 403 was several metres deep in churning, muddy water. So powerful was the current that the heavy wooden door was torn from its hinges. Struggling to escape from the flood, Myrna María was swept off her feet as she left the house. Only the quick wits of some men across the street saved her from drowning.

The street I saw was almost unrecognisable. Thick, brown mud reached halfway up the ground-floor windows. Energetic digging had uncovered one side of a buried car. Drains had backed up, the smell of raw sewage wafted from doorways.

A few days later I found Myrna outside her front door among a kitchen. She gave me a tour of the mud-stained ground floor. In one bedroom a filing cabinet drawer stood alone in the middle of the floor. "This is what hurts most," she said.

It was Myrna María's poems. "We'd been thinking of having them published," she said. The living room was full of smashed furniture. Mud-soaked clothes hung from the curtain rail. Miraculously the Christmas tree, decorated early in fulfilment of a New Year's resolution, was virtually unscathed.

The government has promised to declare these riverside properties uninhabitable. There has been no talk of compensation. "This is all we have," said Myrna. "I don't know what we'll do. But I still think God has been good to us. He saved the lives of my children. We have to have faith."

Old Taiwan party wins by wooing younger voters

John Gittings in Taipei

THE party of Chiang Kai-shek, the Chinese Kuomintang (KMT), which fled to Taiwan half a century ago, made a comeback from electoral decline last weekend.

It seized the high-profile mayoralty of the capital, Taipei, from the opposition Democratic progressive party (DPP). Ma Ying-jeou, the smiling new face of a restyled "moderate" KMT, won by an easy margin against the populist incumbent, Chen Shui-bian. Mr Chen had made enemies as well friends by cleaning up the city.

The KMT also made significant gains in the expanded national legislature, where it lost seats in the last two elections, gaining at the expense of the breakaway New party.

The Chinese communist government will be quietly satisfied at the good fortune of its old Nationalist enemy, having played its part by signalling hostility to the pro-independence DPP. The United States, which has to carefully balance its relations with Beijing and the regime which it once saved from Mao Zedong, will be relieved.

The key to the election upset is to be found in a Taipei cafe which serves 15 kinds of coffee while kittens lap up the customers' milk.

Traditional Chinese culture was not known for its love of coffee or cats. But the new generation of twentysomething Taiwanese has a different lifestyle and likes to meet in tasteful eating places with [illegible] They were the ones the DPP had to capture to maintain its electoral advance of recent years.

"I have voted for Mr Ma," said Ms Tang, a trainee optician. "He and Mr Chen are both good candidates, but he's more moderate."

Ms Lee and her boyfriend are first-time voters. "Most of us young people are voting for Mr Ma," he said. "We're not bothered about him being a mainlander: he's got modern ideas, and we want to go into business."

The DPP emerged from the pro-independence movement which forced the KMT to relinquish its monopoly of power. Mr Chen was a charismatic activist who went to prison for it. In 1985 his wife was deliberately run over by a KMT supporter, and remains in a wheelchair.

Today the KMT is still able to mobilise superior resources and makes good use of its connections in government and business. It also buys votes, though on a smaller scale than before.

The DPP's propaganda continues to target the KMT's mainland background. But it is nearly 50 years since Chiang Kai-shek fled to Taiwan. Under the native-born President Lee Teng-hui, the KMT was able to repackage itself as the party of the "new Taiwanese".

Committed DPP supporters still believe that "Ma Ying-jeou will hand over Taiwan to the Chinese".

Mr Chen has been tipped as the next DPP presidential candidate in the year 2000. But he faces defeat [illegible] status quo.



MARINA Ripa di Meana, the irrepressible wife of the former European commissioner Carlo Ripa di Meana, brought a whiff of scandal to that most hallowed of cultural preserves, La Scala opera house in Milan.

She and other animal activists barged into the foyer in an effort to shame women wearing furs to La Scala's opening night.

Ms Di Meana, a veteran animal rights activists, wore a short black jacket which she flung open to reveal the words "No Fur" written in large violet letters across her bare chest.

PHOTOGRAPH: STEFANO RELLANDINI

Marines burn cannabis plants

Ira Mathur

AT THE invitation of the government of the Caribbean island of St Vincent, 120 United States marines have begun a two-week exercise in the mountainous interior to eradicate the cultivation of what is reputed to be the finest marijuana in the world. The last time such a mission was undertaken, in 1996, more than a million plants were uprooted.

The cannabis benefits from soil rich in minerals from the Soufrière volcano. In the Netherlands, where the drug is sold legally, it is the most expensive cannabis on sale.

The US government is footing the $50,000 bill for the mission, the marines' fifth in the Caribbean.

The exercise has angered Vincentians. Bongo Shaka, head of the Marijuana Farmers and Supporters group, says it will mean a return to poverty for thousands of islanders.

The group has written to President Clinton suggesting that Washington should fund job creation instead of military exercises.

The prime minister, Sir James Mitchell, has refused to meet the group, saying that if his government tacitly supported marijuana cultivation it would threaten support for the already suffering banana industry.

Anna Borzello in Kampala

MAJOR-General Salim Saleh, the younger brother of the Ugandan president, Yoweri Museveni, has resigned as presidential adviser on defence after confessing to "improper conduct" in the privatisation and sale of Uganda Commercial Bank.

Gen Saleh claimed that a company in which he is a major shareholder, Greenland Investments, had improperly bought UCB shares from the original Malaysian purchasers because he wanted the bank to remain in Ugandan hands.

"If my actions smacked of impropriety, it was impropriety caused by my feelings, especially for the poor and the weak of this country for whose protection and uplift I have toiled so much," he said. He did not make reference to allegations that UCB had lent millions of dollars to companies in which he has a stake.

This is not the first time the charismatic Gen Saleh, a hero of the guerrilla war which took President Museveni to power in 1986, has left office. In 1989 he was retired because of a conflict of interest in his business and government work.

His admission could not have come at a more sensitive time. A meeting of the Consultative Group of 27 donor countries is taking place in Kampala this week to discuss aid. The government relies on aid to make up 55 per cent of the budget.

Even before Gen Saleh's confession, donors had expressed concern about corruption in the country. A report by Transparency International this year placed Uganda as the world's 13th most corrupt country.

Film-makers rip up 'protected' Thai beach

John Vidal

IN ALEX Garland's best-seller The Beach, a group of hedonistic backpackers discover a wild tropical beach, start to break the taboos of civilised society and muse about the destruction of nature.

As in fiction, so in the Hollywood dream factory. The Scottish producers of the $65 million film adaptation, which stars Leonardo DiCaprio and Tilda Swinton, last week won the right to continue destroying one of Thailand's most protected and beautiful beaches on the grounds that it is in the national economic interest.

Twentieth-Century Fox, owned by Rupert Murdoch, chose Maya Bay on Phi Phi Ley island, off southern Thailand, as one of three locations for the film, which starts full production in January.

But producer Andrew Macdonald's idea of the perfect beach was hundreds of coconut trees and long clear views down to the azure Andaman Sea, instead of Maya Bay's natural scrub bushes.

He applied to the Thai forestry department to plant 100 trees and grub up the dunes to clear two 100-metre stretches on the dazzling white beaches. The Thai authorities agreed and classified the film-makers' plans as an "improvement project".

The film company paid $100,000 and left a deposit of $130,000 against damage before the bulldozers went in. More than half of the level section of the beach has now been dug up and the sand dunes broken up. Hundreds of holes have been dug, destroying the roots of plants that hold the dunes together.

Enter Thailand's environmentalists, who occupied the beach, wearing DiCaprio masks, and pointed out that it was illegal even to pick a flower or disturb a crab in this national park in Krabi province.

Pre-production work was halted for two weeks of investigations. Last week a government study concluded that the movie would affect the environment, but the damage would be limited and could be repaired. The environmentalists have vowed to continue their opposition, saying that the government has set a legal precedent that could allow developers and tourism access to all Thailand's protected parks.

Mr Macdonald, who learned last week that work could restart, apologised for the row. "We have guaranteed to rebuild the dunes. We've employed a horticulturalist and irrigation specialist. He added: "You can't blame the environmentalists. They have to live here."

But Mr Macdonald, who made the cult hits Trainspotting and Shallow Grave, has walked into dangerous territory in other ways.

In the novel, four people are murdered. In Krabi province luxury hotel developments have led to corruption, extortion and killings. In the past few years more than 50 people are thought to have been murdered, many of the bodies ending up on local beaches.

But Mr Macdonald denied reports that he had hired armed guards to protect the film crew and DiCaprio, who will be paid up to $20 million. "Absolutely untrue. I haven't even seen a gun here," he said.

Mr Garland, the novel's author, said last week he knew nothing of the row. "I've been in Japan and the [United] States for the last few weeks, and hadn't heard anything until a friend asked me about it."

US firearms law triggers rights row

Michael Ellison in New York

UNITED STATES gun clubs went to court last week to fight for their inalienable right to bear arms on the same day as an 18-year-old was accused of shooting dead five members of his family.

The National Rifle Association (NRA) claimed that tight new laws on buying guns violated their privacy, a point lost on the people of Dalton, Michigan. Two school friends, Seth Privacky and Steven Wallace, are accused of murdering Seth's father, mother, grandfather, brother and his brother's girlfriend. There was no known motive.

Action by the NRA came as a national system was introduced to run instant background checks on people buying guns. It is aimed at reducing the time taken to gather the information, from five days to five minutes.

The measure had an instant effect, but for the wrong reasons. Gun dealers around the country said they had trouble getting through to the Federal Bureau of Investigation phone bank handling the checks. Even when they did make a connection, the computer had stopped functioning.

The system checks buyers at the country's 105,000 licensed dealers against lists of people disqualified from owning guns. An FBI spokesman said that of 5,000 calls they received, 3,300 were approved, 12 rejected and the others delayed for more inquiries.

The checks were brought in under the terms of the Brady law, named after the press secretary who was seriously wounded when John Hinckley tried to murder President Ronald Reagan in 1981. That law was passed nearly five years ago, but recent events have given it more urgency.

Last March two boys, aged 12 and 13, dressed in camouflage and shot dead four pupils and a teacher in an ambush at their school in Jonesboro, Arkansas. Pupils at Westside middle school said they believed that the attack had been planned after a girl said she did not want to go out with one of the boys. The guns came from the home of the other boy's grandfather.

The Jonesboro killings were part of a series in schools over a six-month period that claimed 15 lives and included attacks in Mississippi, Kentucky and Oregon.

Blair in the grip of island mentality

EUROPE THIS WEEK
Martin Walker

DESPITE a minor political hiccup in an offshore island, the cause of European integration took two giant steps forward last week. The central banks of 10 of the countries to join the new single currency on January 1 all cut their interest rates to 3 per cent. The 11th, Italy, cut its rates to 3.5 per cent.

It was indeed a "somewhat sensational" move as the head of the European central bank, Wim Duisenberg, described it. It was also a striking display of the strategic co-ordination and convergence of economic policy that the euro was always intended to bring.

It followed another important development in what is now a galloping process of euro-driven integration. If everyone is using the same money and the same interest rates, then other aspects of economic policy are also under intense pressure to converge all across Europe, from wage settlements to pricing policies to tax rates.

So France and Germany, at one of their regular bilateral summits in Potsdam last week, jointly suggested not only accelerating progress towards tax harmonisation, but also ensuring that laggards among the 15 members of the European Union do not hold others back. It was time, the joint Franco-German declaration said, to start moving towards a system of majority voting for tax policies. Individual national vetoes would have to go.

Since the national veto is enshrined in the Maastricht and Amsterdam treaties, this will require a new treaty, which in turn requires a new Inter-Governmental Conference (IGC) to prepare it. The Germans, who assume the presidency of the EU's Council of Ministers in January, say that if they can get their other business of agricultural and budget reform out of the way in time, they hope to start the next IGC at the EU summit in Cologne in June. The Finns, who take over from the Germans in July, in turn also want to use their six-month presidency to advance the cause of ending national vetoes.

All of this created uproar in Britain. Tony Blair's moment of truth with Europe has arrived with this threat to outflank London's veto. The renewed isolation in Europe that the British government dreads is looming again.

The joint declaration from the German and French governments was a charter for integrated economic, income, welfare, and employment policies across the EU, or at least within the euro-zone. It said: "We will campaign for stronger co-ordination in economic policy, particularly in the framework of the 11 euro-countries, for rapid progress in harmonisation of taxes, and for the formation of a real European social model."

President Jacques Chirac and Prime Minister Lionel Jospin of France, and Chancellor Gerhard Schröder of Germany stressed that the Franco-German relationship "is more important than ever as the engine of Europe's construction". The new Franco-German accord, and their firm agreement on tax harmonisation, undermined British hopes of using the political relationship with the new German Social Democratic government to become a third partner in the traditional Franco-German alliance.

The immediate reaction from the British minister in charge of finance, Chancellor Gordon Brown, who has repeatedly threatened to use the British veto against EU tax plans, was firmly negative. "That would require a change in the European treaty, and that is not going to happen," he stated.



Head to head . . . Jospin, Chirac and Schröder in Potsdam last week

But at the same time Britain approved a proposal from the European Commission that would make Oskar Lafontaine, Brown's German counterpart, the prime spokesman for the new single currency at Group of Seven meetings for the whole of next year. He will speak for the euro during the presidency of both Germany and Finland, which is not a member of the G7. France takes over the presidency at the beginning of 2000.

The power of Lafontaine and the Franco-German alliance, and the perceived threat to British sovereignty over taxes, galvanised the British Eurosceptic press to new heights of xenophobia. "Foxtrot Oskar" blared the front page of the Sun, with the "F" and the "O" picked out in red. The coarseness of the insult and the vulgarity of the wit had to be explained to baffled Europeans, even after Blair had condemned Rupert Murdoch's Sun for its tone.

Not only is the honeymoon between the Murdoch press and Blair clearly over, but in Lafontaine they have identified a new hate figure. And while they monstrously exaggerated the EU threat to British institutions, suggesting falsely that both Britain's trial-by-jury system and its zero-rating of value added tax on food and children's clothes would have to go, they are broadly right to say that the coming of the euro will take the process of integration to a new and far more intense phase.

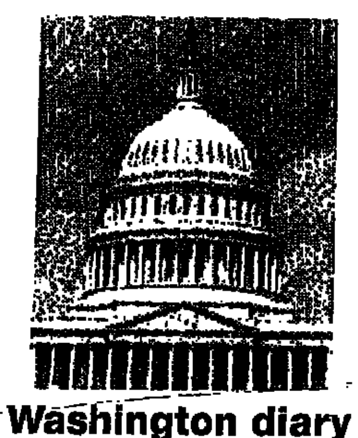
All of this British panic tended to obscure the striking flaw that emerged in the Franco-German summit. There was a serious clash over reform of the common agricultural policy (CAP), where Chirac said "compromise will still be needed" in a wide-reaching negotiation at which Britain's celebrated budget rebate would also be on the table.

The French and Germans were also divided on policies over nuclear energy, the role of nuclear weapons within the Nato alliance, and most crucially on Schröder's plans to reform the EU budget over the next few months. Without a deal on the CAP, such reform will prove elusive and Britain and Germany are agreed on the need for a spending freeze on the EU budget.

In short, Britain has much to play for in the usual give-and-take of Euro-haggling. But the Murdoch press on the one hand, and the reality of euro-driven integration on the other, give Mr Blair little room for manoeuvre.

He has been given a grim warning of the kind of propaganda barrage he will face when he calls the referendum and appeals to the public to agree to give up the pound in favour of the euro, and all that flows from it.

Snagged on the barbed wire of history



Washington diary

Martin Kettle

LATE 1990s Washington has been dominated by people who are in turn haunted by their difficult private pasts. Since 1992 the president in the White House has been a man who never knew his father and who carries the name of his stepfather, Roger Clinton. For the past four years, the House Speaker has been a man whose parents' marriage lasted three days and who was later adopted by his own stepfather, Bob Gingrich.

Meanwhile the Czech-born woman who is now the US Secretary of State discovered only last year that two of her grandparents died in the Nazi holding camp at Theresienstadt, while a third, her grandmother Olga Korbel, was murdered at Auschwitz.

By all accounts Madeleine Korbel Albright has taken time to adjust to the revelations about her Jewish origins and her family history that were first published in the Washington Post nearly two years ago. Until last week she had said little about it in public, preferring to come to terms with her past in private and in her own time. So when Albright chose to break her silence on the matter on December 1, her remarks were of obvious interest.

She wanted to speak, she said, about "a subject for which I have not yet found — and may never find — exactly the right words". The subject was "my grandparents, whom I learned recently were Jewish and died along with aunts, uncles and cousins in the Holocaust". As a girl, she "didn't often think about grandparents. I just knew I didn't have any".

The event that prompted Albright to speak so personally about such intense questions was a conference in Washington last week. Hosted by Albright's own state department, the conference brought together 44 nations and more than a dozen non-governmental organisations to discuss further international action on "Holocaust-era assets", in other words the restitution and appropriate moral accounting for the possessions that were seized from European Jews between 1933 and 1945 and which have since been dispersed or retained in many parts of the world.

With a few exceptions — all of which are significant and many of which are emotive — the issues debated in Washington were marked by a moral agreement of the kind that marks the post-cold war world. The most conspicuous and important example of this convergence was Russia's unexpected announcement that it, too, would co-operate in the drawing up of an international database of looted art, and that it would return works to families who could provide proof of ownership. Given the sheer size of the holdings in Russia and other parts of the former Soviet Union, this pledge, if fulfilled, deals with more than half of the stolen stockpile.

There are legitimate questions to be raised and a proper debate to be held about whether, at this distance of time from the Holocaust, the international focus on gold, artworks, property and money as a form of restitution is really quite as virtuous as it may appear. It is not necessarily self-evident that lawyers taking contingency fees on class action suits across Europe over property claims more than half a century old is a morally unquestionable way of accounting for the murder of millions.

Nevertheless one of the most significant commitments made by country after country at the Washington conference was to openness — or, as it is fashionably called these days, transparency.

Albright went on to say: "Because the sands of time have obscured so much, we must dig to find the truth. This means that researchers must have access to old archives; and by that I do not mean partial, sporadic or eventual access; I mean access, in full, everywhere, now."

These are powerful, even noble, words. But they represent what might be called the Kenneth Starr view of historical accounting. In the real world of living politicians, things are never quite so simple.

Later on the same day that Albright had made her moving plea for openness, her spokesman James Rubin appeared at the state department to talk about US relations with Chile. He explained that Washington is "conducting a review of documents in its possession that may shed light on human rights abuses during the Pinochet era".

Rubin said that Washington would "make public as much information as possible consistent with US laws and the national security and law enforcement interests of the United States". His statement sparked a clutch of stories about the accounting that this would involve. There was talk, inevitably, of the opening of cans of worms.

A day later, Rubin was back at the podium. He had, he feared, been over-enthusiastically interpreted. He had been speaking of "a review of the documents, he stressed, "not an *a priori* decision to release them".

He urged the press not to get too excited. "If you go into it assuming that 10,000 documents are going to be released, as some have already speculated, that would be incorrect." And it would all take a very, very long time.

Pinochet's Chile was not Hitler's Germany. Different times, different customs, of course. But different approaches from the US government, too. If "in full, everywhere, now" is a good disclosure policy with regard to the Nazis, then there is no reason why it should not also apply to one of the Nazis' more effective successors.

Rights for all still remain a dream

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights turns 50 this week. **Ian Black** assesses what changes it has brought

IT WAS well after midnight in the elegantly curved Palais de Chaillot in Paris, opposite the Eiffel Tower, when the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was presented to the United Nations General Assembly half a cruel century ago this week.

"A long job finished," commented a satisfied Eleanor Roosevelt, chairwoman of the UN Human Rights Commission and widow of the United States president who had led the penultimate stage of the bloody triumph over fascism.

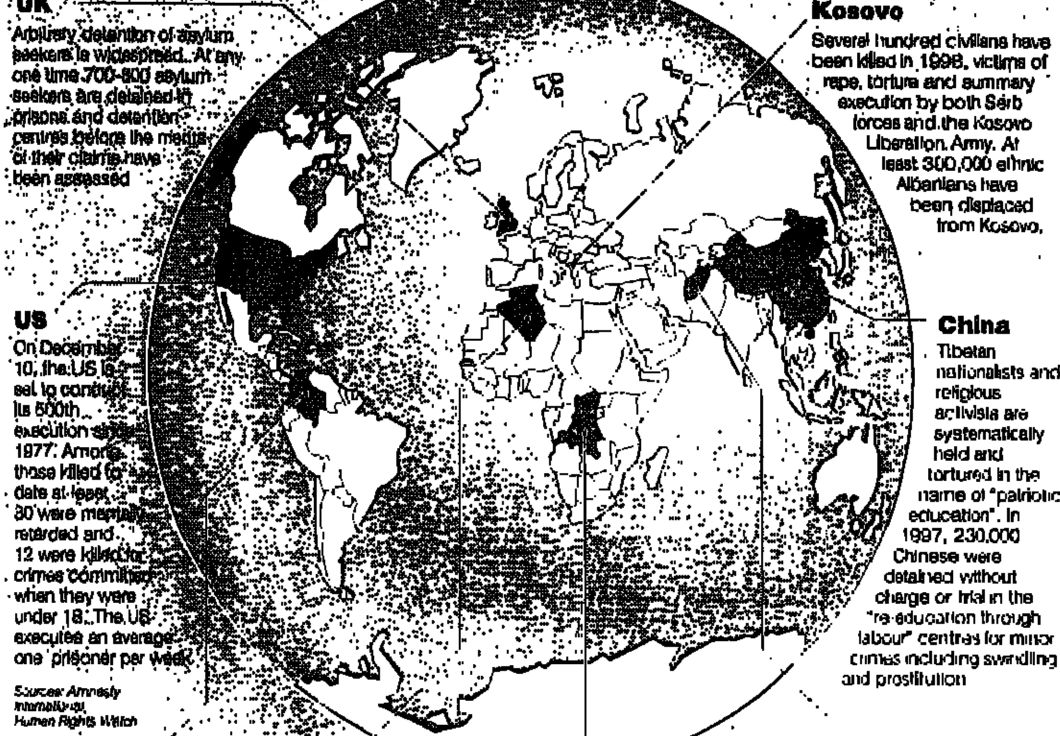
December 10, 1948 marked an event of huge importance: three years after a world war of unparalleled savagery, the fledgling UN gave eloquent expression to the very loftiest of human aspirations.

Trumpeting hope over experience, the language echoed the American Declaration of Independence to affirm that "all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood".

No matter that support for these ringing sentiments was far from unanimous: Saudi Arabia abstained; South Africa, with its new system of apartheid, objected. So did the Soviet Union, demanding the primacy of national sovereignty and the collective over the individual rights it saw as the embodiment of bourgeois liberalism.

It was a moment of heady idealism in unpromising circumstances: as Mrs Roosevelt expressed the hope that the declaration would be a "Magna Carta of all mankind", the world was digging the first trenches of the cold war.

As this week's anniversary celebrations are held in the same curving, modernist edifice on the right bank of the Seine in Paris, the fate of Chile's former dictator, Augusto Pinochet, stands as a symbol of the declaration's lasting importance.



Is there to be justice or impunity for crimes against humanity? How much do rights matter? What progress has been made in 50 years? Scan the globe for examples of genocide, repression, torture, war, rape, starvation and environmental degradation and the answer might well be a hollow laugh.

But since 1948 human rights have entered the mainstream of international discourse. Even the harshest tyrant, from Baghdad to Pyongyang, uses the language of rights — if only to distort its universal meaning.

Algeria, bleeding in a nightmare civil war, boasts a government-backed human rights commission that catalogues the atrocities of Islamist enemies and ignores its own abuses. Other regimes have done the same to deflect criticism rather than create accountability.

Nowadays even the most recalcitrant countries are urged to respect human rights: the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund are offering financial aid to Burma's brutal military junta to coax it into dialogue with the opposition.

Abuses in a changing Iran get insufficient attention. Saudi Arabia, bulwark of the West, remains a black hole. Arms sales continue apace.

Yet the machinery for protecting human rights is there: by the time the cold war ended in 1991, international conventions had set standards for civil and political rights, and women's and children's rights, and benchmarks defining torture and racial discrimination.

Even in the face of horrors in Cambodia, Bosnia and Rwanda, advances have been made. Kofi Annan is the most rights-conscious UN secretary-general yet. His choice of Mary Robinson, the former Irish president, as UN high commissioner for human rights was widely applauded.

This year's UN agreement establishing a permanent international criminal court, which could try a future Pinochet, Pol Pot or Saddam Hussein, was a landmark for international humanitarian law. So was the campaign to ban anti-personnel mines, though both highlighted the US's instinctive opposition to any commitment that might restrict its freedom of action abroad.

But human rights, as Clare Short, the UK's International Development Secretary, has argued, need a broader definition if they are to be become universally respected. In regions where millions live in abject poverty, Western concepts of civil and political rights can mean little if basic economic and social rights are not guaranteed.

This is difficult terrain: torture is torture in any language, but in a globalised though still fragmented world advanced industrial societies cannot assume the primacy of their humanist values.

So as diplomats and dignitaries gather again in the Palais de Chaillot, governments should be reminded of the need for vigilance about their own human rights records, as well as others' — and of a yawning gap between goals and achievements.

France has already been accused of failing to invite Chinese dissidents or Tibetan activists to this week's celebrations for fear of offending Beijing. In a world where abuses are a daily problem, not a philosophical abstraction, there can be no blind spots: Kenya should face censure after admitting that police torture is common. Friends of Egypt cannot remain silent over the detention of the head of the country's Organisation for Human Rights — apparently after receiving a British government grant.

Back in 1948, Nelson Mandela saw the Universal Declaration as "a sudden ray of hope at one of our darkest hours". What the originators drafted was a blueprint for a better future. But the job was not finished that December: it is a work still in progress.

No hiding place, page 12

The Week in Britain James Lewis

Robinson faces death by a thousand disclosures

FRESH DOUBTS were raised about the ministerial future of the Paymaster-General, Geoffrey Robinson, when he was called into Downing Street and questioned about his business links with the disgraced newspaper tycoon, the late Robert Maxwell. Although there was no suggestion that No 10 was unhappy with his explanations, the continuing flow of allegations about his past business dealings threaten to undermine his authority.

The millionaire business man was stoutly defended by the Chancellor, Gordon Brown, when it was revealed a year ago that he was the beneficiary of a multi-million-pound trust in the offshore tax haven of Guernsey. Mr Brown also stood by him when he was forced to apologise to the Commons for failing to declare a shareholding in the Register of Members' Interests. It was the second time he had been rebuked for breaching parliamentary rules concerning his outside interests.

The latest revelations concern his former chairmanship of Hollis Industries, an engineering firm linked with Maxwell. In 1991 Hollis sold two subsidiaries to another wing of the Maxwell empire for nearly £3 million. Within hours they were sold again, to yet another Maxwell firm, at a profit of £1.1 million. Six months later, Hollis went into administration.

Mr Robinson is facing an investigation by the Department of Trade and Industry over more than a dozen allegations that be broke company law before he became a minister. And there was a fresh claim last week that a firm of which he was once a director owes £500,000 to the Inland Revenue.

Mr Robinson is well liked by his fellow MPs, though many of them wonder why, with his means, he wanted ministerial office anyway. He may well be wondering the same thing himself, and colleagues were speculating this week that he might stand down over the Christmas recess, possibly on health grounds.

PRO-LIFE campaigners and church groups threatened a boycott of the Boots chain of chemists' shops because it opened a family planning clinic at its Glasgow store where young people can get free contraceptives.

The project, a joint venture with Glasgow Health Trust, is aimed at reducing teenage pregnancies and will run "drop-in" clinics for customers, particularly young people, to seek advice and information.

Protesters immediately picketed the Glasgow store and threatened to organise flying picket protests at stores across the UK and Ireland.

After learning that a Roman Catholic newspaper, The Universe, with a readership of 200,000, was planning to run a front-page editorial headlined "Don't shop at Boots", the firm said it was reconsidering whether to keep its clinic open.

A PROTEST against the Government's imposition of a £1,000 tuition fee on university students blew up, to everyone's surprise, at Balliol College, Oxford, where two first-year students, Kate Atkinson and Alice Nash, refused to pay. They were refusing, they said, not because they could not pay, but because they would not. They were risking their own careers on behalf of coming generations of students too poor to attend university.

The intention to charge fees, announced earlier this year, was routinely condemned by Oxford's junior common rooms, and some freshers have been withholding their payment, but there was little doubt that they would comply in the end.

Miss Atkinson and Miss Nash, both high-fliers with impressive school records, could be suspended from the start of next term. If that happens, Oxford's junior common rooms hint that there may be wider disruption.

The Balliol authorities, fearful that leftwing activism is about to make a comeback, have set up a scheme to help poor students with their fees. They are reluctant to suspend students who cannot pay, but not those who refuse to pay.

CARLTON Communications faced a humiliating climbdown over a faked television documentary, The Connection, which purported to expose drug trade routes into Britain. It may have to hand back eight national and international awards won by the film.

An internal inquiry found nearly 20 important deceptions in the hour-long programme, which was shown in 14 countries. It found two major unproven claims, including the central thesis that there was a new heroin route from Colombia to the streets of Britain. The inquiry conceded that the film, in which three central characters were paid to act roles, should not have been broadcast.

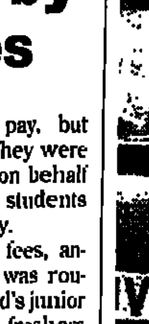
The regulatory Independent Television Commission will meet next week to decide whether to impose a statutory sanction on Carlton. Meanwhile the broadcaster is to establish tough new internal vetting procedures for potentially contentious programmes.

THE GAY rights activist, Peter Tatchell, was fined £18.60 for a "puerile" protest from the pulpit during the Archbishop of Canterbury's Easter sermon. He was convicted under the little-known Ecclesiastical Court Jurisdiction Act of 1860.

The court heard that Tatchell, aged 46, and six other activists from the gay rights group OutRage! climbed into the pulpit during Dr George Carey's sermon at Canterbury Cathedral. Before being removed, he protested about the archbishop's opposition to gay fostering and an equal age of consent.

He was the first person in 31 years to be successfully prosecuted under the act, which forbids "riotous, violent or indecent behaviour in any cathedral church".

The stipendiary magistrate told Tatchell he had "violated the rights of worshippers on one of the most important days in the Christian calendar", though the size of the fine suggested he did not consider it to be a serious offence. A spokesman for Dr Carey said the archbishop had had no role in the prosecution and was "committed to a continuing dialogue with homosexuals".



Grid lock . . . London's mayor will be given power to charge drivers PHOTOGRAPH: MARTIN HAYHOW

Traffic will become London mayor's priority

Peter Hetherington

THE DEPUTY Prime Minister, John Prescott, last week promised Londoners the most modern form of city government in Europe, with an elected mayor and a capital-wide council with powers to clamp down on motorists and to revive public transport.

Unveiling the Greater London Authority Bill, Mr Prescott said traffic congestion would be at the heart of the legislation. The bill is likely to be one of the most complex in the new parliamentary session.

As his Department of the Environment and Transport reported that average rush-hour speeds in the capital had fallen to 12mph, Mr Prescott said the London mayor would be given power to charge motorists on designated routes and levy fees from big employers with company car parks. The revenue would be used to improve underground, rail and bus services.

Centrepiece of the bill will be an agency called Transport for London, under the wing of the mayor and the capital's assembly. It will be responsible for the Underground and buses, and have powers to implement road charging.

But Mr Prescott warned that the Government might have to delay handing over responsibility for the Underground. He admitted that discussions with private companies — which will have the task of modernising it — might not be complete by mid-2000, when the mayor and assembly may well have been elected.

Critics point to potential friction between the mayor and the 25-member assembly. They will share the budget of £3.3 billion covering eight areas including fire services and the police.

The mayor, supported by a small cabinet, will "devise strategies and action plans" while preparing budgets, while the assembly will prove a "check and balance" with powers to amend the budget and scrutinise mayoral decisions.

Legal aid gets shake-up

Clare Dyer

THE most radical shake-up of the English legal system for at least 50 years was outlined by the Lord Chancellor in a White Paper last week.

The Access to Justice Bill will revamp the legal aid scheme to target resources more on ordinary people's legal needs and less on lawyers and the courts.

Through a new Community Legal Service, money saved by tighter controls on the grant of civil legal aid and on lawyers' fees will be diverted to help for the disadvantaged in such areas as debt, welfare benefits, housing and children's cases, provided through both lawyers and advice centres.

The Government aims to get better value for taxpayers' money by ensuring, through a contracts system, that only competent lawyers carry out publicly funded work. The £1.6 billion legal aid budget will come under its control for the first time.

The Lord Chancellor dismissed arguments that the changes would lead to lack of choice. "If I was the man in the street, I would prefer a choice among quality-guaranteed lawyers rather than go to a lawyer who might not have the skills and experience for the case in hand."

For the 1 per cent of high-cost criminal cases which eat up more 42 per cent of the crown courts' legal aid budget, individual case contracts will be struck with lawyers. Some QCs have received £400,000 or more from legal aid in a single year.

The bill will abolish the Legal Aid Board and set up a new Legal Services Commission in two parts: a Community Legal Service and a Criminal Defence Service.

The Community Legal Service will co-ordinate Citizens' Advice Bureaux, law centres and other advice sources, with the more specialised services provided by lawyers so legal help can be better targeted on those in real need, and negotiate contracts with lawyers and others.

The Community Legal Service Fund will replace civil legal aid; money spent on this and the voluntary agencies will be treated as a whole. As legal costs come under control, the aim is to divert funds to more basic advice and help services for the poor and disadvantaged.

A "funding assessment" will replace the current merits test for deciding who qualifies for civil legal aid. No-win, no-fee agreements will be extended to cover divorce disputes over property.

The current means test will be abolished, but judges will be able to order a convicted defendant with assets to pay some or all of the defence costs at the end of the case.

Mandelson's team win gobbledygook award

PETER Mandelson has won the Plain English Campaign's Golden Bull Award for gobbledygook, for his department's minimum wage draft regulations, which include the memorably-named category of "hours of non-hours work worked by a worker", *writes Seumas Milne*.

Robert Kilroy-Silk, the TV presenter and former Labour MP, will present the annual awards made by the campaign — a self-appointed public guardian against bureaucratic gibberish and incomprehensible official jargon — in London this week.

A spokesman for the Trade and Industry Secretary said that Mr Mandelson would be unable to attend, but had ordered the re-drafting of the prize-winning passage as a result of the Plain English Campaign's dubious accolade.

In a reply to Chrissie Maher, the campaign's director and founder, Mr Mandelson said her letter announcing his prize had arrived at an "opportune moment" and "inspired the drafters to re-think the offending words".

"Hours of non-hours work" in National Minimum Wage Regulation 16 — which was supposed to cover people such as youth hostel wardens, who have to be available when there is no specific work to do — will now read "hours of unmeasured work". The £3.60 standard minimum wage rate becomes law in April.

Tories in turmoil after Lords deal fails

Michael White and Ewen MacAskill



THE Conservative party was riven by an historic split last week when William Hague was forced to sack Lord Cranborne, his leader in the House of Lords, after an unauthorised backstairs deal with Labour over abolition of hereditary voting rights that went spectacularly wrong.

Mr Hague revealed the plan — which would have allowed nearly 100 of the 759 hereditary peers to stay on until a fully reformed upper house was established — in dramatic exchanges at Prime Minister's Question Time in the Commons. Only a handful of key players on either side had known about the scheme designed to avoid a fight with the Lords this winter that might have wrecked the Cabinet's legislative programme.

The Conservative leader then faced a revolt by Tory peers, who backed Lord Cranborne's compromise by 80 votes to 20 despite Mr Hague's plea for a principled stand over Lords reform. At an emergency shadow cabinet meeting, he promptly sacked Lord Cranborne for what the peer admitted had been "going behind his back" to Downing Street for three weeks of talks.

Mr Hague immediately addressed a meeting of backbench Tory MPs who endorsed his position even more emphatically than astonished peers had rejected it.

It confirmed a split which, some MPs predicted, could either finally ruin the Conservative party or set it on the road to modernisation, free from centuries of élitist privilege.

Mr Hague appointed the chief whip, Lord Strathclyde, an hereditary peer, to the vacancy.

Even loyal Tory MPs were dismayed. "It's a catastrophe, the end of the party as we now know it," said one. "[Tony] Blair has played it brilliantly, he's captured our cavalry," conceded another.

In ducking outright war in the Lords ministers hoped to use the time saved to get through extra bills to set up the Food Standards Agency and the Strategic Rail Authority.

The crossbenchers have been privately seeking a consensus on Lords reform for two years. Led by the former Speaker, Lord Weatherill, they were 10 minutes from unveiling the 91-peer deal to a Westminster press conference when Mr Hague unexpectedly revealed the plan at Question Time.

Taunting Mr Blair about "this huge climbdown" over New Labour's favourite whipping boy, the hereditary peers, Mr Hague said the Tories were "not prepared to acquiesce in that change because we are not prepared to join forces with him on major constitutional change that is based on no comprehensive plan or principle".

Mr Blair, who had expected to announce the deal later that day, recovered quickly. "I thought we had the agreement of the leader of your party in the House of Lords. Indeed, I believe we have the agreement."

At the heart of the row was a compromise thrashed out behind the scenes between Mr Blair, Lord Cranborne, the Lord Chancellor, Lord Irvine, and Baroness Jay, the new Labour Leader of the Lords, that would have smoothed the passage of the Lords reform bill. Under the deal, the 91 hereditary peers would be elected by their own parties in proportion to their current strength — 42 Tories, 28 crossbenchers, two Labour and three Lib Dems. How long they would last would depend on how long it took Mr Blair's royal commission to produce "stage two" reform, a partly elected upper house. Three years, said Labour; at least five, said Tories.

What is extraordinary is Lord Cranborne's belief that it was good politics. His actions produced the Conservatives' worst single day since the general election disaster.

A Tory frontbench peer said: "We stole defeat from the jaws of victory. We should have had Tony Blair on every bulletin trying to explain away the deal on the peers. Instead, we were in the dock." He described Mr Hague as being primarily to blame for screwing up Lord Cranborne's carefully worked deal on Lords reform.

But despite the chaos, Mr Hague's leadership is under no immediate threat because no credible alternative candidate exists who would be acceptable to Tory MPs.

Mr Hague has complex reasons for rejecting a deal, but mainly because he has no lever in the Commons, given the size of the Labour majority. But a more skilful politician than Mr Hague would have handled the deal better.

The poor state of their relations became obvious during the Lords-Commons ping-pong over the European elections bill: Lord Cranborne wanted to settle with the Government but Mr Hague insisted on pushing it to the point that the Government lost its bill.

The credibility of Mr Hague sagged under fresh blows when four peers resigned from his frontbench in protest at Lord Cranborne's sacking. Most prominent was Lord Fraser of Carmyllie, Lord Cranborne's deputy. Lord Bowness, Lord Pilkington and the Earl of Home joined him. Later Baroness Strange, a hereditary Scottish peer, and Baroness Flather announced they were quitting the Tory whip to sit on the cross-benches in protest.

Comment, page 12

Ambassador rebuked

Richard Norton-Taylor

SIR David Gore-Booth, one of the Foreign Office's most controversial diplomats, was severely rebuked last week in a damning report by the parliamentary ombudsman, who described the (unnamed) envoy's conduct over a consular complaint as "wholly deplorable".

In a report which contains unprecedented criticism of Foreign Office officials, the ombudsman, Michael Buckley, described the department's response to the complaint as "disingenuous" and castigated the Foreign Office for refusing to apologise for the ambassador's indefensible action.

The complainant, a British citizen, was obliged to resign from the company he worked for after the ambassador criticised the man's conduct in a letter to his chief executive. The company, which was not identified, was a government contractor.

The employee complained in 1994 about having to pay a fee to the British consul for a letter of introduction to obtain a tourist visa from another country. He described the consular staff as "officious, unhelpful, and rude".

The ambassador subsequently passed the man's letters of complaint to the company's chief executive, without the employee's knowledge.

The FO has agreed to give the former company employee an *ex gratia* payment of £5,000, but no disciplinary action has been taken against the ambassador.

Sir David, now high commissioner to India, was ambassador to Saudi Arabia at the time.

Eton and Oxford-educated, he famously told the Scott arms-to-Iraq inquiry that "of course, half a picture can be accurate". He also memorably described Iranians as people who "do not think logically", and called Indian officials "incompetent bunglers". Sir David is to leave the FO at the end of this year.

New twist for end of the peers show

SKETCH
Simon Hoggart

HEAVENS! A real, live news story emerged at Prime Minister's Question Time last week. It isn't meant to happen. It's like the England batsmen not collapsing, or the Queen burping in public. It is against the natural order of things.

Prime Minister's Question Time is supposed to resemble a fight in a pub car park. Everyone is far too fuddled to have any idea what it's about, merely that it's vital to be on the winning side.

We astounded sketchwriters had to be helped from the Gallery, and supported to the bar, where we comforted ourselves with the cup that inebriates but does not cheer.

The person I felt sorry for was Bill Cash, the greatest Eurosceptic of them all. Mr Cash had drawn the first question to the Prime Minister. Europe: the subject of harmonised taxes.

Mr Cash uncoiled to his full six-foot something, and majestically quoted Churchill: "Tell the truth to the British people!" he intoned. "They have been misled! The time has come for you to tell us the truth!"

Tony Blair had no such intention. He evaded the question by promising to "represent this country properly and faithfully", whatever that might mean.

On any other day bellicose Tories might have tried to slice him down, like a woodlouse under a lawn strimmer. But Mr Cash's moment of triumph had beckoned and then disappeared. He looked like the father of the bride learning that the groom has just been spotted fleeing in a taxi to the airport.

Mr Hague rose and asked, with the mock ingenuousness that always marks his first question, whether the Prime Minister was "happy to see nearly 100 hereditary peers continue to sit in the House of Lords after your forthcoming Bill has been enacted"?

Labour MPs looked astonished. It was the first they had heard of this extraordinary wheeze, the rubber-bladed guillotine as it might be termed.

"I am delighted to see from your question it is an indication that you are now prepared to agree to what would remove hereditary peers altogether in two stages . . ."

Labour MPs tried to rally but there was no denying their shock. It was as if Mr Cash's hero were to have told the British people: "We shall fight on the beaches, we shall fight on landing grounds, but probably not in the fields or streets. As for surrender, we shall approach that question on a phased basis . . ."

Mr Hague jeered that Mr Blair had no principles. Mr Blair scoffed that Mr Hague could not even give orders to his leader in the Lords.

In the end Mr Hague said limply that Labour wanted to turn the peers into a House of Cronies, and Mr Blair said: "Your cronies in the Lords agree with me."

When the sketchwriters recovered, we agreed that Mr Blair had won the day. But the sweetest victory must be the utter confusion in the Tory ranks.

Short ignores brief to boost trade with China

Simon Cooper

CLARE Short, the International Development Secretary, last week revealed she had refused to lobby for British companies during her recent trip to China.

Ms Short said her officials had asked her to try to win business for British firms. In an interview on ITV, the minister said: "Within my briefing there was some suggestion that I might raise the odd contract that was around. I didn't bother."

Ms Short went on to say she did not consider it her duty to talk to Chinese government aides about potential business deals. "China and any other country should buy the most bargain-full project that is on offer," she said.

John Redwood, the shadow trade secretary, called on Tony Blair to "discipline Clare Short and tell all ministers that they must help business from Britain when travelling abroad at taxpayers' expense".

A spokeswoman for the Confederation of British Industry said the Prime Minister's visit to China in October had already flown the flag for British firms.

"The CBI sees the role of the Prime Minister and other government ministers as facilitators in building and developing trade between the UK and China. However, it does not look to them to promote individual companies."

Jenny Tonge, the Liberal Democrat spokeswoman for international development, said Ms Short was "quite right" to keep trade and aid separate, but added: "Of course where aid is not involved ministers and MPs of all parties should be ambassadors for British business abroad."

Ms Short also told how she had made attempts to block British arms sales abroad on human rights grounds, in line with her department's new powers to object to such export deals.



Pinochet law lord linked to Amnesty

Jamie Wilson and Nick Hopkins

ONE of the law lords who ruled that General Augusto Pinochet should face trial for human rights atrocities is a director of a charity affiliated to Amnesty International, it emerged this week.

Amnesty has admitted that Lord Hoffman — who last week was at the centre of allegations over his wife's links with the human rights organisation — has been an unpaid director of Amnesty International Charity Ltd for seven years.

Although the organisation insisted that Lord Hoffman's work with the charity was entirely unrelated to its campaign to have Gen Pinochet extradited to Spain, the revelations could not have come at a worse time.

The Home Secretary, Jack Straw, must decide by Friday whether to allow the extradition process to start or to send the former Chilean dictator home, and his deliberations are at a delicate stage.

Lord Hoffman's seven-year involvement with the charity was conceded by Amnesty on Monday in a letter to Kingsley Napley, the solicitors acting for Gen Pinochet, who had demanded from them details of his links with the organisation.

Amnesty also admitted that in 1997 Lord Hoffman was involved in an Amnesty fund-raising appeal for a new building for the organisation in Britain.

According to Amnesty, the Lord Chief Justice, Lord Bingham, who originally ruled in the High Court that Gen Pinochet had immunity from the jurisdiction of the English courts, was also involved in this appeal.

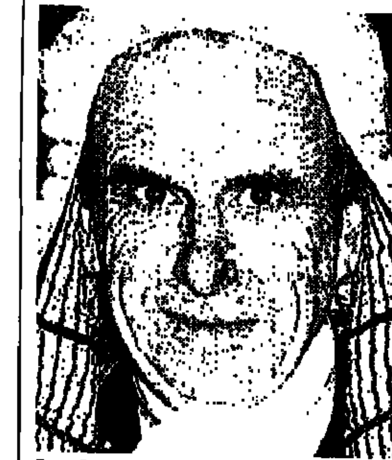
The general's lawyers are already seeking to overthrow the House of Lords' ruling against Gen Pinochet on the grounds that Lord Hoffman's wife, Gillian, is an administrative assistant with the human rights organisation in London. Submissions sent to Mr Straw claim that Lady Hoffman's position puts into question the validity of the law lords' ruling.

Amnesty has been one of the most vociferous organisations in the campaign to extradite the former dictator to Spain.

Amnesty International Charity Ltd was set up in 1986 after Amnesty tried and failed to win charitable status for its entire operation. It was established to pay for research and educational work on human rights issues and is funded by donations from individuals.

Its directors — Lord Hoffman and Peter Duffy QC — and the company secretary, Stuart Whitehead, are not salaried, and meet periodically to review finances and prioritise future projects.

A spokesman for Amnesty said: "The involvement of senior legal figures, including Lords Hoffman and Bingham, with Amnesty International charity work is a matter of public record and we were surprised when Gen Pinochet's solicitors wrote to us about it. If Gen Pinochet's team are raising this question now, it a sign of how desperate they have become."



Lord Hoffman: an unpaid Amnesty director for seven years



Way forward . . . Karen and Stephen Armstrong who survived the Omagh bomb on August 15, with newborn Lucy at Altnagelvin hospital in Derry last weekend PHOTOGRAPH: TREVOR McBRIDE

IRA reviews arms logjam

John Mullin

THE IRA leadership last weekend staged a rare conference to assess the logjam over the decommissioning of terrorist weapons which is threatening the Good Friday agreement.

Security sources said the two-day meeting took place in Co Cavan, just inside the republic. About 60 delegates were involved, but there is no indication of the outcome.

IRA army conventions are unusual. The last one, in May, paved the way for Sinn Fein to take up its places in the Northern Ireland assembly. A similar change would be needed if the IRA was to embrace decommissioning, which is banned under its constitution.

The meeting came as Gerry Adams, Sinn Fein president, repeated his criticism of First Minister David Trimble, leader of the Ulster Unionists. He accused him of backtracking on an agreement brokered by Tony Blair last week on the make-up of Northern Ireland's ministries and cross-border bodies.

Mr Trimble meanwhile warned that the province could be facing a re-run of the Sunningdale fiasco of 1974 — the last attempt at devolution. He said the reason the power-sharing executive collapsed 24 years ago was because nationalists were too ambitious in seeking powers for cross-border bodies. "There are dangers in history repeating itself."

The exchanges come as the leaders of eight Northern Ireland political parties met in Washington on Tuesday to be honoured for their part in producing the agreement.

The row also cast a pall over the Nobel Peace Prize, to be awarded jointly to Mr Trimble and SDLP leader John Hume in Oslo on Thursday. It was meant to recognise the new beginnings, but Ulster Unionists and the SDLP are divided.

Mr Blair, who has visited Belfast twice in recent days, is determined to find a solution before Christmas in order to rush through the legislation in time for the handover of powers in February.

● The IRA owned up to a 26-year wrong when it admitted it had killed Jean McConville, a 37-year-old Belfast widow with 10 children, and secretly buried her body in an undisclosed location.

The IRA abducted, murdered and secretly buried at least 14 people during the Troubles, and the families have waged a long battle to have their bodies returned so that they can have proper funerals.

In Brief

FORMER Tory cabinet minister Jonathan Aitken is to stand trial at the Old Bailey on charges of perjury and perverting the course of justice relating to the collapse in June last year of his High Court libel action against the Guardian and Granada TV's World In Action.

POLICE officers who were traumatised by attending to victims after the 1989 Hillsborough disaster lost a landmark House of Lords ruling for compensation that will limit the rights of emergency service workers to claim damages for psychological injuries.

THE Office of Fair Trading is investigating Camelot after complaints that the National Lottery operator has used unfair tactics to squeeze out competitors to its Instants scratchcard.

POLICE were forced to justify their decision to deploy more than 500 police officers in the largest drugs operation London has seen when it emerged that it had netted only £80,000 worth of cannabis.

SCIENTISTS have warned that the clubber's favourite drug, Ecstasy, could trigger long-term damage to vital brain cells called serotonin neurons, which control moods.

THE St John Ambulance has launched an inquiry after three men were jailed for sexual abuse of cadets over a 23-year period.

PLANS to reduce the legal blood alcohol limit from 80mg to 50mg are to be abandoned by the Government to allow police to concentrate on persistent drivers who ignore the present limit.

MORE than half the solicitors found guilty of misusing clients' money continue in practice, according to the Solicitors' Disciplinary Tribunal.

FAMILY doctor Harold Shipman has been charged with murdering two more of his women patients, bringing to eight the number of charges he faces.

FORMER hostages Camilla Carr and Jon James, who were freed in September after being held for 14 months by Chechen rebels, are to marry in the spring.

PROPOSED changes to speed up house buying would mean sellers having to meet much more of the costs of a sale, including an information pack with a survey. But the housing industry warned that the changes would have to be compulsory.

THE REV Dr John Brown, the father of Chancellor Gordon Brown, has died at the age of 84.

Colour test for cervical cancer

Sarah Boseley

A TEST devised at Cambridge university may end the scandals that break over cervical screening, the Cancer Research Campaign claimed this week.

The test is a refinement of the screening process. Although it is only at a very early stage — it has been tried on only 58 smear slides — the Health Secretary, Frank Dobson, promised he would find the money to introduce it nationwide if the next three years of clinical trials bore out its potential.

The scientists have found a way of marking abnormal cells on a smear slide in a different colour so that they stand out.

Screening saves the lives of about 4,000 women a year by detecting the early changes in pre-cancerous cells. But, said Nick Coleman, lecturer in pathology at Cambridge, there are 300,000 to 500,000 cells per slide. In a 15-minute examination under a microscope "abnormalities are extremely easy to miss with the standard test".

The test has emerged from work on the way in which DNA replicates itself. The scientists — Ron Laskey, Gareth Williams and Dr Coleman — have found a way of using antibodies to home in on proteins, called Cdc6 and Mcm5, which are only present in cells which may replicate. Cervical smear cells should not be dividing, so any with these molecules must be potentially cancerous.

The antibodies can be stained with a fluorescent or coloured dye, marking out abnormal cells. In the 58 cervical smear slides so far examined, the scientists had a 100 per cent success in detecting abnormalities that they knew were there, and found abnormal cells on three slides that had been passed by screeners.

"We feel that it should be possible to close the loophole in the existing screening procedure," said Prof Laskey.

The Cancer Research Campaign, which has financed the work over the past 15 years, has spent £50,000 on patenting the test in every country where it may be relevant.

They have signed a contract with a Californian company, diaDexus, which will begin clinical trials in 18 months.

Post Office free to invest

Nicholas Bannister

THE Post Office is to be freed to make big foreign takeovers and to keep more of its huge profits under government proposals announced on Monday. But the commercial freedoms announced by the Trade and Industry Secretary, Peter Mandelson, fall short of those wanted by the Post Office management and recommended by a House of Commons select committee.

The PO is to be allowed to borrow money to finance expansion projects — expected to total £1 billion in the next few years — but such schemes will have to be approved by the Department of Trade and Industry and the Treasury. However, such borrowings will be counted as part of public borrowing, and could leave Mr Mandelson having to fight the Treasury for approval for the money.

In recent years the PO has been powerless as foreign post offices have moved into the British market, creaming off international business and taking over companies in the transportation, printing, warehousing and courier business.

Two years ago, for example, the Dutch post office spent more than £1.2 billion buying the TNT global transport business, while the German post office, which owns 25 per cent of the DHL international courier company, this year spent £223 million on a stake in Securicor's parcel operation, and last week acquired a 68 per cent stake in a French parcel distributor.

Mr Mandelson said the PO would have an arm's length relationship with government, which would have to approve the organisation's five-year strategic plan. This would give the PO the freedom to invest, price commercially and borrow. It would continue to have to deliver letters at a standard price.

Senior PO executives had been hoping Mr Mandelson would go for full or partial privatisation. But they were prepared to settle for the recommendation that the organisation's status should be changed to that of an independent, publicly owned corporation.

Under the new arrangements, the Government will take only 40 per cent of PO profits, compared with about 80 per cent in recent years.

Rail firm charged with manslaughter

Keith Harper

GREAT Western, an operator of the former InterCity trains, was last week served with seven charges of corporate manslaughter over the 1997 Southall rail crash in which seven people died.

The company faces unlimited fines for the accident, which happened when a Swansea to London Great Western express collided with an empty freight train at Southall, west London, in September last year. The freight train had been crossing the line in the path of the express.

The legal case is the most serious to be brought since rail privatisation and follows a long investigation by the British Transport Police.

In another case still pending, Railtrack and two unnamed officials are facing manslaughter charges for causing the death of a train driver who was hit by a passing train while making a trackside telephone call at Longsight, Manchester.

No charges have been laid against any employee for the Southall accident, in which 147 people were injured. But the driver of the passenger train, Larry Harrison, is due to appear in court this week on manslaughter charges.

Meanwhile Railtrack is expected to be ordered to improve safety standards. After a year-long inquiry the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) has found that Railtrack consistently fails to meet the Railway Inspectorate's standards. Its report is likely to lead to the Government handing rail safety controls to an independent body outside Railtrack, the privatised company that maintains the track and infrastructure.

Prohibition notices issued by the Railway Inspectorate rose from four to 19 in the past year. Notices are issued as a last resort when the infrastructure becomes a danger to the public and railway staff.

The order for improved safety standards comes on the 10th anniversary of the Clapham rail crash, in which 35 people died. A faulty signal circuit was blamed for that accident. The HSE will tell Railtrack to fit a new train protection and warning system throughout the railways at a cost of £152 million.

Transmission beacons will be placed on the track to trigger emergency braking if a train is about to pass a red signal. The system is said to provide a higher degree of train protection, and might have prevented the Southall crash. It does not give the same guarantees for safety as Automatic Train Protection, one of the main recommendations after the Clapham accident. But the system, which operates on Eurostar services, was rejected by both British Rail and Railtrack as too expensive: it would cost up £1 billion to install.

The HSE's final move will be to order the withdrawal of all slam-door carriages by 2007. It says the stock is far too old and "its crashworthiness falls well below modern standards".



Animal rights protesters in York last week supporting Barry Horne's hunger strike PHOTOGRAPH: [illegible]

Hunger striker defiant over animal rights

ANIMAL rights campaigner Barry Horne is on the verge of slipping into a coma after nearly nine weeks on hunger strike, *writes Will Woodward.*

Mr Horne is determined to fast until a royal commission is announced to look into animal welfare, which Labour promised to support before the 1997 election. "I remain determined to expose this Government's lies and hypocrisy in breaking its pre-election promises."

He repeated that he would call off his protest if the Government agreed to set up a royal commission "or similar independent body" to examine animal experimentation issues.

Horne, aged 46, is at York hospital. He was moved from Full Sutton Prison, East Yorkshire, where he is serving 18 years for firebombing animal rights targets on the Isle of Wight in 1994.

Friends believe he is unlikely to last the week as his potassium levels have fallen dangerously low. He has lost vision in one eye and hearing in one ear.

The Animal Rights Militia said it would assassinate 10 supporters of vivisection if Horne dies. Security has been stepped up at animal testing laboratories.

Local polls could run fox hunters to ground

Lucy Ward

THE idea of holding local polls on fox hunting, based on the principle that it would be banned unless its supporters persuaded voters otherwise, is to be backed by ministers, it emerged last week.

The move to put the onus on hunt supporters to fight for the right to hunt locally — rather than forcing opponents to mobilise backing to outlaw it — would please critics of hunting, who now believe referenda are the likeliest route the Government will take in reflecting pressure from Labour MPs for a ban.

Discussions are going on between the Home Secretary Jack Straw and MPs keen to end fox hunting to thrash out details of a referendum scheme. The key sticking points are whether ballots should be based on opting in or opting out of a nationwide blanket hunting ban; the geographical area covered by a referendum; and the way a ballot should be triggered.

But the suggestion that the presumption would be a ban unless local areas fought for an exemption infuriated hunting supporters, who oppose referendum proposals and want "politics removed from the issue altogether".

MPs, including Michael Foster, the Labour member for Worcester whose private member's bill to outlaw hunting with hounds failed to become law earlier this year, have held some half-dozen meetings with Mr Straw and other Home Office ministers since March.

MPs made clear at a meeting with the Home Secretary that they expected quick government action to ban hunting. Clive Soley, the chairman of the Parliamentary Labour Party, devised a referendum scheme.

As well as the nature of the referendum, talks have focused on the size of the area covered by a poll. There are five possible options, ranging from a parish — widely agreed to be too small an administrative unit — through district council areas, counties and police force areas (which can include several counties), to regions such as the South West or West Midlands.

The likeliest remains the county-wide ballot. Opponents of hunting are concerned that in larger areas more people would feel distant from the issue and would not vote.

Romanian refugees housed in hospital

Rory Carroll

SIXTY Romanian women and children on Monday bedded down on camp beds in a disused hospital ward, baffled by a furore breaking over them.

Protests by Kent residents at the decision to house the asylum seekers at a hospital — albeit in an unfurnished 1903 smallpox isolation unit unsuitable for modern treatment — were greeted with disbelief. "Do sick English people want to be here?" asked one woman, through an interpreter.

Managers at Joyce Green hospital, Dartford, Kent, tried to defuse criticism that an overstretched health service should not be accommodating people who enter Britain illegally, and predicted they would be moved by the end of the week.

A straw poll of Dartford locals suggested most were convinced that patients had been evicted to make room for the Romanians, even though the ward was closed two years ago because there was no lift.

The women and children were among 103 Gypsies found hidden in a lorry at the Dartford freight terminal on December 3, the biggest group to enter Britain illegally. The 42 men are being held in detention centres by the immigration service.

Most of the asylum seekers came from Tandrei, a village in east Romania, said Dan Dumitriu, a translator working for social services.

They fled to Britain to escape persecution from police and government agencies, said Tamase Simina, aged 33, with six children. "They didn't like us. They wanted us to go, go away, go anywhere. The journey was horrible."

● The Government plans to fine truck drivers £2,000 if their lorries are found to contain illegal immigrants as stowaways.

Doctors 'close ranks' over negligence cases

Sarah Boseley and Audrey Gillan

VICTIMS of medical negligence, their families and lawyers are calling for fundamental reforms to the National Health Service complaints procedure and for doctors and hospitals to admit their mistakes and apologise when things go wrong.

A Guardian investigation has discovered there is disquiet at the highest levels at the refusal of doctors to be open with patients who have accidentally been harmed. There is particular concern about the distress suffered by families who have lost a child and, in spite of years of asking, have never been told how their son or daughter died.

The massive payments and profuse apologies by hospitals in the civil courts to some patients — usually those left with brain damage or profound disability needing a lifetime of care — mask the plight of parents who can by law be awarded no more than £7,500 in compensation for a child's life. Once a hospital has paid this sum into court, often without even admitting liability or saying sorry, the family loses legal aid and has nowhere else to go.

Lawyers agree the medical profession closes ranks, either afraid or unable to say sorry.

Russell Levy, of Leigh Day, believes that the whole culture of medicine is at fault. "Doctors have this incredible fear of criticism and litigation . . . Focusing on what has happened really will prevent things happening and far fewer people will want to complain and consider litigation."

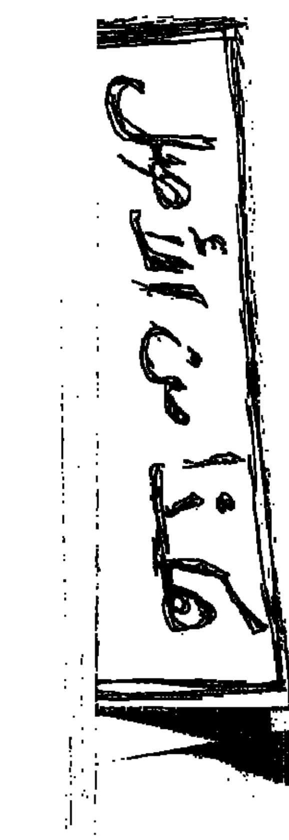
Doctors have the protection of the law in their refusal to reveal exact details, as Will Powell discovered after the death of 10-year-old son Robbie. He took the local GPs to court, suing for the trauma he claimed he and his wife had suffered as a result of what he claims to be the cover-up over Robbie's death.

The doctors applied for the case to be struck out. "They said they didn't have any obligation to tell me the full truth about my son," he says.

The High Court supported Mr Powell, but the Appeal Court backed the doctors and the House of Lords refused to hear his appeal. He is now taking the case to the European Court, claiming an infringement of his civil liberties. The General Medical Council, following the Powell judgment, told doctors that they had a moral obligation, if not a legal one, to be frank with parents.

● The number of people having to wait more than six months to see a hospital specialist, a breach of the Patient's Charter, has soared almost 16 per cent in three months.

The rise lends support to claims that the Government is cutting waiting lists for operations — in pursuit of its pre-election promise to reduce them by 100,000 — only by allowing backlogs to build up elsewhere.



Gadafy still proves elusive

THE Libyan People's Congress, which began one of its rare sessions this week, is expected to consider whether to hand over the two suspects in the Lockerbie case for trial in the Netherlands. This follows Kofi Annan's meeting with Colonel Gadafy last weekend. But it is not clear that a deal is in prospect, even though the United States and Britain have gone a long way toward promising that the Libyan regime will have immunity from the consequences of what it may or may not have done 10 years ago. No witnesses from Libya would be called, Gadafy has been given to understand, and the trial would focus solely on the guilt or innocence of the two men charged with the murder of the 270 people killed when the plane went down. In return for putting the two Lockerbie suspects on the hook, to put it bluntly, Gadafy gets off it — along with any leaders in other countries who may have had a hand in Lockerbie. He gets more, in particular an effective end to sanctions. These, while not of great consequence economically, are a political problem for Gadafy because Libya's well-off class resents the isolation they impose and especially the travel difficulties the suspension of air links has created.

Against this the Libyan leader has to weigh the political disadvantages of handing over the two suspects, sacrificing them in a way their families and clan constituencies will presumably resent. The difficulties Gadafy is still apparently making no doubt arise from his assessment of the balance between these two factors. He would have a better chance of offsetting the disadvantages if he could point to a complete lifting of sanctions, but he has been offered only a suspension because of other matters, including a second aircraft bombing in which Libyans may have been involved. He may be holding out for a complete end to sanctions, while maintaining his demand that, if convicted, the two should not serve their sentence in Scotland. Since he knows that Britain and the United States will never concede this, it gives him an escape route if he decides that a deal at this stage is too dangerous for him politically.

Nato searches for a new role

WHEN Nato's foreign and defence ministers meet in Brussels this week, their inquiries about the latest Anglo-French declaration on defence are unlikely to be animated. Britain's defence secretary, George Robertson, trumpeted the agreement signed at St Malo last week as the start of a new era in defence co-operation. But this new era has the character of a New Year's resolution. It rings with good intentions, has minimal substance, and of course we heard it last year and the year before that. What Nato's other members will be wanting to know is whether any concrete changes were agreed by Britain and France.

There has long been talk of developing a formula for the Europeans to shoulder more of the Nato burden, both in terms of cash spending and the contribution of men and hardware. Equally, there has long been talk of giving muscle to the European Union's common foreign and security policy. The problem was the relationship between these two. In the days when France refused to play its part in Nato, suggestions for giving Europe its own defence identity were viewed nervously in Washington as a device for developing an alternative to Nato. British governments shared the United States' suspicions, while the Europeans saw the British hesitation as proof of Albion's incorrigible aversion to everything continental.

With the end of the cold war a "new era" dawned. The collapse of the Soviet Union meant discussions on Nato's future could take place in a calmer atmosphere. France and Britain started to talk about defence co-operation. The crises in Bosnia and Kosovo demanded intervention, as well as exposing the weakness of Europe's military structures. Neither Britain nor France could put together a rapid reaction force of several thousand men without technical intelligence from US satellites. To project more power over a longer distance and keep it engaged for several months would require US transport aircraft and logistical support.

The St Malo agreement resolves none of these difficulties. As a sop to the Americans it talks of the capacity for "autonomous" rather than "independent" action, but does not say what items are to be procured to make that possible. It avoids the thorny issue of Europe's security architecture, and whether the Western European Union, which groups those nations that are members of both Nato and the EU, is to fade away, or grow stronger. Above all, it says nothing about the two major decisions which the US wants the member states to reach by April, when Nato celebrates its 50th anniversary.

The first is whether Nato should expand its shadow to cover the whole of Eurasia, with authority to act anywhere in the Balkans, the Caucasus, and central Asia. The US is pushing for such a shift to get broader automatic backing for its global pretensions. The second point is whether such moves could be undertaken without authorisation from the UN Security Council. Under Nato's original mandate these issues never arose. It was axiomatic that Nato was an alliance for mutual protection, and any state had the right under Article 5 of the UN charter to use force in self-defence. Nato's own founding treaty recognised the "primary responsibility of the Security Council for the maintenance of international peace and security".

To undermine the UN's primacy and turn Nato into a regional or global policeman is an even more dramatic shift than Nato's absorption of three former Warsaw Pact states of central Europe into full membership. This year's Kosovo crisis brought a consensus within Nato for intervention, though the issue of UN authorisation was fudged. To go from a single emergency to a permanent change in policy requires a much fuller debate. It would be better not to push it through before April.

Blair upstages luckless Hague

WILLIAM Hague's lucklessness continues to be an enduring theme. Last week's twist in the saga should have brought a rare flash of good fortune, as he sprung a surprise on the House of Commons, revealing a backroom deal Labour had apparently sought with the Conservative leadership in the Lords. Mr Hague hoped to ambush the Prime Minister, seeking to expose him before his own party as a backslider and compromiser on a cherished Labour principle: the removal of the hereditary members from the upper house. For a second the plan appeared to work. Labour backbenchers were instantly hushed as Mr Hague revealed that their leader had covertly plotted to compromise on the principle by allowing a vestigial group of 91 hereditaries to retain their place in Britain's most exclusive club. That should have placed Tony Blair squarely on the receiving end of backbench fury and accusations of sell-out.

But that's not how it worked out. Instead it was William Hague who wound up as the victim of the manoeuvre. All his bombshell did was leave a gaping crater inside the Conservative party. Far from being forced on to the defensive, Mr Blair was able to attack Mr Hague as utterly at odds with his own leader in the Lords. The Prime Minister skewered the Tory leader both for humiliating his man in the Lords — by overruling him in public — and for exposing himself as less than fully in charge of his own party in Parliament. More deeply, Mr Hague has again driven a wholly avoidable wedge through the Conservative party, splitting Tory MPs from Tory peers on the one issue that is likely to dominate the next political year.

The politics, then, Mr Blair got right. But what of the policy? Our own view on hereditary peers has not wavered: we would like them gone from Britain's legislature. Aristocratic blood should not carry with it an automatic place in the nation's law-making body. But more important than the purity of a principled argument is the realisation of it. If Labour, Liberal Democrats and cross-benchers in the Lords are all convinced that the plan represents the only way this vital reform can happen, without falling victim to ermine guerrilla warfare, then it is an irritating but acceptable compromise. Progressives must remain vigilant, however: watching to ensure the 91 escapees do not quietly become part of the Lords furniture — unless, of course, they are democratically chosen.

The Lords' compromise appears to have been a good day's work by the Government. The Tories are in disarray, their leader badly damaged, while an essential piece of constitutional reform may have a better life expectancy than before.

Noose tightens for the architects of evil

Martin Woollacott

WHEN General Radislav Krstic appeared in court in The Hague on Monday, the proceedings of the international criminal tribunal for the former Yugoslavia underwent a qualitative change. The tribunal has grown in stature since its foundation, but it needed to deal with suspects who had overall command responsibility rather than individuals personally involved in torture and killing. Krstic is the first senior officer or politician suspected of such overall responsibility for war crimes to come before the court.

It is not only that the Bosnian Serb general, arrested by United States troops last week, commanded the units which took Srebrenica in 1995 and whose soldiers, or some of them, were then responsible for the worst single atrocity of the Bosnian war. Nor that the Dutch people will fasten on every detail of his evidence for whatever light it can throw on the behaviour of their own soldiers, the United Nations garrison of the Srebrenica safe area who so signally failed to protect it.

What Krstic could also provide is information going beyond his own role to illuminate the responsibility of General Ratko Mladic, to whom Krstic reported directly, of Radovan Karadzic, and of senior people in Belgrade, up to and including Slobodan Milosevic himself.

The trail that leads to these men is already heavy with clues. But by bringing certain connections into the open, the examination of Krstic may not only seal the fate of Mladic and Karadzic, but make it impossible for the contradictory and repugnant Western and Russian policy of dealing with Milosevic as a partner as well as an adversary to continue for much longer. In this way the tribunal could become, as many of its supporters envisaged from the start, an instrument not only of justice, but of enforcement and intervention in former Yugoslavia as potent in its way as military force or economic sanctions.

Once again last week the dismal charade of treating the man most responsible for the Balkan wars as if he were a responsible statesman was enacted in Belgrade. Christopher Hill, the US mediator on Kosovo, handed Milosevic a draft peace plan. Milosevic handed Hill a counter-plan. Both solemnly promised to study the respective documents. There may be no practical alternative to such encounters for the time being, but the context of Western and Russian policy-making is changing.

In the US the argument that there can be no fundamental improvement in either Bosnia or Kosovo until the regime in Belgrade changes is gaining more support. The State Department spokesman, James Rubin, last week responded to criticisms that US policy was sustaining Milosevic in power by saying that the Serbian leader was part of the problem rather than part of the solution, and that he could be no guarantor of stability in Kosovo.

Rubin's remarks produced a predictable flurry of attacks on the US in the rump Yugoslav parliament and in the controlled press. As for Russia, while the government remains opposed to the use of military force in most circumstances, it is well known that Yevgeny Primakov has no liking for Milosevic, and no confidence in his future.

Milosevic has to an extent brought this increased hostility on himself by his recent actions, which combine an assault on what remains of free institutions in Serbia with a purge of some of the more rational and independent of his own officials, as well as what looks like preparations for a confrontation with Montenegro.

The legal hobbling of independent newspapers and broadcasters, and the dismissals of independent academics at Belgrade university were followed by a purge of his own inner circle. Some of these people are out because, whatever their complicity in Milosevic's policies in the past, they objected to the brutal campaign in Kosovo or to actions that now risk a clash with Montenegro.

The possibility of a crisis over Montenegro has reminded those who have to deal with Milosevic that this mischief maker never sits still. He feeds on crises, which he both creates and then exploits, first making war and then making peace, and deriving momentum from both processes.

What is also clarifying the minds of the outside powers is consideration of how costly the business of coddling Milosevic has become. At the end of this year the mandate of Nato's stabilisation force in Bosnia has to be renewed. The UN representative in Bosnia, Elizabeth Rehn, has estimated that the 33,000-strong force will be needed for another four years. Some think it will be much longer.

THE COST of the 2,000 international verifiers destined for Kosovo, and of the extrication force that will be stationed in Macedonia to get them out in the event of trouble, now has to be added to the Bosnia sums. On top of these military and quasi-military costs, there is the expense of the civil effort in Bosnia and of economic aid in Bosnia and Kosovo. For Russia, the cost of supplying Serbia with free gas and oil — without which Serbia's economy would finally collapse — must be a serious consideration for a country whose finances are under strain.

The West and Russia possess a dual key which, turned together, could hasten the end of the Milosevic regime. The West sustains Milosevic by treating him as the most important diplomatic partner in the Balkans. Russia sustains him by giving him help whenever Western military action is threatened and by the vital energy supplies. Russia is constrained by the state of opinion in the Duma, where support for Serbia is a test issue for the communists and the nationalists. That is a complicating factor, but the effort ought still to be made to co-ordinate international policy.

Following General Krstic's arrest, the indictment of Milosevic must at some point become an issue. Sooner or later the problem will be one of managing the transition in Serbia itself, to ensure that it is not bloody, and that it leads to a regime that is a distinct improvement on that of Milosevic.

Bridge over troubled waters

Its Bosporus crossing links Europe and Asia, yet despite Turkey's geopolitical importance and long membership of Nato, it batters in vain on Europe's door. **Stephen Bates** and **Martin Walker** ask if Ankara deserves ostracism from the Brussels club

IT IS ironic that Europe's leaders chose to meet in Vienna this week to discuss their worsening relations with Turkey. Ever since the Turks first laid siege to the city in 1529 there has been a legacy of misunderstanding, mistrust and mutual incomprehension between them and western Europeans.

The choice of Vienna was accidental — Austria currently holds the rotating presidency of the European Union — but it was apposite given that this has been one of the most difficult years for the European-Turkish relationship.

First there was the Turkish government's decision to end its attempt to join the EU, after years of constant rebuffs. Now a trade war is threatened over Italy's refusal to extradite the Kurdish guerrilla leader Abdullah Ocalan.

Jacques Santer, president of the European Commission, said last week that the EU would stand solid with Italy if Ankara imposed sanctions. Brussels emphasised that not all EU member states necessarily regard Ocalan as a terrorist, although his PKK organisation has killed thousands of civilians during a violent 20-year campaign. Europeans cannot understand why Turkey should so misconstrue their reluctance to hand over Ocalan without due process of law to a regime which would so like to hang him high (although the death penalty has not been used in Turkey since 1984). For their part Turks cannot understand why the EU should spurn them in this matter as in their bid to join the European club.

'Twas ever thus. In the dictionary of quotations, from Shakespeare to Mozart, Dickens to Gladstone and Lloyd George, the Turks get insulting citations. From Lawrence of Arabia, allegedly raped in the desert, to the movie Midnight Express and the fugitive financier Azil Nadir, a contemptuous image has built up around a nation whose people are otherwise acknowledged to be both cultivated and friendly, living in a country with a long and civilised past and an economically dynamic and Western-orientated present.

Consult any of the taxi drivers of many of Europe's cities (those who are not themselves Turkish, that is) and you will be regaled with hostility to immigrants, all lumped together as Turks or, more insulting still, "shish kebabs". Turkey has been waiting to join the EU now for nearly 40 years and, for all many Europeans care, could wait another 40. It joined the queue in 1959, way before Britain, but, following a decision at the Luxembourg summit late last year, it has been placed effectively last. It looks as if it will not be admitted until well into the next millennium after Romania and Bulgaria — countries with much less secure economic and political bases.

This is despite Turkey's important strategic position, no less so now than in the cold war. It controls the water supply to neighbours such as Syria, and commands the likely pipeline routes for the world's next great untapped oil fields in Azerbaijan. Turkey's problem was that its latest bid to join the EU followed the end of the cold war. As President Suleyman Demirel remarked bitterly: "When the defence of European civilisation [against communism] was at stake, they didn't say we were Turks and Muslims."

The European Commission concedes that the country is well on the way to qualifying for admission on economic grounds: "Turkey has all the hallmarks of a market economy, possessing a well-developed institutional and legislative framework, a dynamic private sector and liberal trade rules. The economy has considerable potential for growth and has shown great adaptability, which has contributed significantly to its modernisation."

Although per capita gross domestic product is only a third of the EU average and inflation approached 70 per cent last year, Turkey is growing fast: exports have risen by more than 20 per cent since 1995, half of which now go to Europe. Agriculture's share of gross national product, a key transitional indicator, is down to 14 per cent. This is despite a trade loss averaging $7 billion a year since links to Iraq were cut after the Gulf war. Cutting off the Iraqi oil pipeline has cost Turkey $27 billion since 1991, and a third of its 300,000-strong lorry fleet has had to find alternative work. As a senior EU diplomat remarked: "Turkey has proved a reliable ally internationally. It has adhered to United Nations sanctions despite the cost. It is the world's only real Muslim democracy. It has a large and stable middle class. It is a consumer society. It would be a glittering prize for the EU."

Turkey's participation in Nato — it has the second largest army in the alliance — and its pivotal location athwart the Soviet Black Sea fleet's only exit to open seas, explains the long indulgence the country enjoyed throughout the cold war. The United States' subsequent devotion is based on Turkey's pivotal position in the Middle East, perfectly placed to dominate the eastern Mediterranean and Central Asia. It can launch air strikes and patrols against Iraq, and provide pipeline routes for oil from the Caspian basin that will not have to use the Russian pipeline monopoly. The discreet military co-operation between Turkey and Israel, with joint exercises and freedom to train in Turkish airspace is a second bonus for Washington.

There is a further factor, one that Richard Perle, former assistant secretary at the Pentagon, suggests may be the most important of all at a time of American worries about Islamic fundamentalism. "Turkey is a country where most people subscribe to the Islamic faith, but it is a secular state, allied and strategically oriented to the West, with elected civilian governments, democratic procedures, an independent judiciary, free markets and a free press.

"This makes Turkey virtually unique in the Islamic world, and offers an important alternative model of pro-Western democracy to the growing numbers of Arabs who suspect that their countries do not have to be run in the way they have been."

Turkey's long wait was not eased last year when Helmut Kohl, the then German chancellor, chose a meeting of Christian Democrat leaders in Brussels to announce firmly that as far as he was concerned Turkey could never join the EU. "Turkish membership of the EU is not possible," he said.

What he was really worried about was immigration. There are an estimated 2 million Turks living in the EU (out of its population of 11 million Muslims). One worker in four in the German car industry is Turkish. The Turks have not been made welcome, although there are signs that the new German government might be prepared to offer citizenship to some of its Turkish residents. But they have not been a burden on social security systems, as recent Belgian figures show.

Only last month Austria's foreign minister, Wolfgang Schüssel, was telling the European Parliament that no promise could be made — yet, as a recent book notes, Turkish workers are "apparently thought good enough to clean the floors in the Commission buildings in Brussels".

Greece too remains implacably opposed to Turkish membership of the EU, to such an extent that it may block all enlargement if there is an accommodation with the Turks over Cyprus. It has already done its best to stymie EU aid to its old rival, in contravention of the customs agreement signed three years ago. Turkish occupation of northern Cyprus has given Greece an incentive to oppose Turkish accession; the prospect of (Greek) southern Cyprus joining gives the EU its most knotty single problem.

THE Americans and their Nato allies in northern Europe used to be confident that Greek-Turkish strains could be kept under control. When the cold war ended, the numbers of tanks and guns on Nato's central front had to be slashed by 40 per cent. Nato shipped most to Greece and Turkey — just as the Balkan wars to their north got under way — on the grounds that this would be cheaper than scrapping them. The fact that weapons to be scrapped in order to seal the peace in central Europe were finding their way to the fringes of a real war zone in the Balkans was an irony lost on the Nato planners.

The articulation of Turkish interests isn't helped by endemic political instability. (Prime Minister Mesut Yilmaz lost office late last month.) With a track record of three coups in the 20 years before 1980 and a strong presence in politics since, the country's armed forces stand ready to intervene again. Only last week the general staff warned politicians to take care. Non-religious parties are strong but unable to coalesce, leaving a gap for Muslim fundamentalists. Observers see recent support for Islamic parties as more of a protest than evidence of religious conversion, a strike against the personal enmities and instability which brought down the coalition government. None of this helps Turkey in presenting a coherent image to the outside world.

The country, for all its desire for European acceptance, has been slow to acknowledge or appreciate genuine concerns, particularly over human and social rights. Its underpaid, corrupt, unaccountable and sometimes brutal police force has, according to EU sources, proved much more effective than Turkey's suave diplomatic service and the millions spent on public relations in promoting a certain picture of the country abroad.

It is Turkey's human rights record that gives the EU every opportunity to block membership. The recent Commission report was scathing: "The actual upholding of civil and political rights enshrined in the Turkish constitution and law remains problematic. Cases of torture, disappearances and extra-judicial executions are recorded regularly. Freedom of expression is not fully assured and is subject to numerous restrictions . . . many of the cases put into question the effective control and supervision of the security forces."

It is the reverse side of the great westernisation process inaugurated by Kemal Atatürk, the founder of modern Turkey in the 1920s. He may have pledged the state to a secular, Western future, but he also bequeathed a legacy of authoritarianism and intolerance of dissent. Although civilian politicians say they are committed to improving human rights, the legacy of distrust remains.

Atatürk and after

1914 Ottoman empire — allied with Axis Powers — enters first world war. Conflict in Palestine, Arabia and Gallipoli.
October 1918 Defeated, signs Mudrow Armistice.
November 1918 Anatolia occupied by Allies. Dismemberment of empire.
1919-1923 Post-war occupation and war of independence. Emergence of army general, Mustafa Kemal Pasha, as leader of National Assembly.
July 1923 Lausanne Treaty gives new Turkish State independence.
October 1923 occupation of Istanbul by Allies ends.
1923-38 Kemal premiership.
1924 Caliphate abolished.
1934 Kemal receives honorary title Atatürk, "father of the Turks".
1938 Atatürk dies
1939-45 Turkey neutral during second world war, joins Allies in 1945.
1945 Multi-party system introduced. US gives economic aid. Turkey becomes military bridgehead.
1952 Joins Nato.
1950s Conflict with Greece over Cyprus and natural resources of Aegean.
1964 Becomes associate member of European Economic Community.
1970 Domestic political unrest.
1974 Occupies northern Cyprus.
1980 Military coup. Kenan Evren becomes president.
1982 Civilian rule restored. Evren continues as president.
1984 Fighting with PKK over Kurdish independence.
1993 Tansu Ciller becomes first woman prime minister.
1995 Islamist Welfare Party becomes largest party in National Assembly.
1996 Secular True Path Party and Welfare Party form government.
1998 The Welfare Party is outlawed by the constitutional court.



Asia slump forces Boeing to slash jobs

Mark Tran in New York

BOEING, the world's biggest aircraft manufacturer, is to axe up to 48,000 jobs over the next two years — 20,000 more than previously announced — in a move the company blames on the Asian economic crisis.

The US planemaker warned last week that next year's financial results would be sharply down from previous forecasts. The job cuts amount to a 20 per cent reduction in Boeing's workforce from 238,000 in June.

The cutback in production is likely to have a big impact on 350 British suppliers. Seventy per cent of Boeing's European suppliers are based in Britain.

British Aerospace, which makes small components for the affected models, and engine-maker Rolls-Royce said it was too early to tell if any action was needed. Smiths Industries, which manufactures electrical controls for Boeing, has cut back its operations.

Boeing shares plunged on the news, dragging down Wall Street. Alan Mulally, Boeing Commercial Airplanes president, blamed Asia's economic slump for the company's latest manoeuvres.

Boeing's decision to scale back production of passenger planes did not surprise Wall Street. But analysts were stunned by the downward revision of profit margins despite cost-cutting. Boeing said its commercial aircraft operating margin for 2000 could be 1 per cent to 3 per cent, a decline from the 1999 estimate.

Boeing has been offering discounts on its aircraft under intense competitive pressure from Airbus Industrie, the European consortium.

It is still reeling from its decision in 1996 to crank up production to record levels, to meet booming demand from the world's airlines and to win orders against Airbus. But it could not deliver. Costs soared because of overtime payments, and assembly lines ground to a halt because parts did not arrive in time.

Last year Boeing took a $4 billion charge and made a loss of $178 million, its first in 50 years. It is still committed to delivering 550 planes this year, a record 620 in 1999 and 490 in 2000. Total sales in 1999 should come to $58 billion, declining to $50 billion for the following year.

Boeing said it would reduce production of 747 jetliners from 3.5 to two aircraft a month late next year, and to one a month in early 2000 if market conditions failed to improve. Production of 757 jets will drop from five to four a month, and the 767 programme will drop from four to 3.5 aircraft a month in early 2000.

The latest jobs cuts augur poorly for negotiations between Boeing and its engineers next summer, to replace the present contract which expires next September. Boeing executives admit poor relations with their largest union helped trigger a 69-day walkout three years ago.

The size of the job cuts surprised Boeing employees. Union leaders said they were given no warning. "It's affected everyone pretty badly. Everybody's scared they're going to get laid off," said a worker on 777 jetliners at Boeing's Everett assembly plant.

Dollar next up for rollercoaster ride

The crisis may have to visit the United States before the world financial system is reformed, says **Larry Elliott**

IF THE 1970s were the decade of stagflation and the 1980s the decade of debt, the 1990s have been the decade of currency crises. Beginning with the pound's ejection from the European exchange rate mechanism in September 1992, there have been regular and increasingly virulent bouts of currency turbulence.

The presumption is that Brazil will be next on the list, and with the government of President Fernando Cardoso gripped in the pincers of economic contraction and an overvalued exchange rate, only the foolish would bet against it. Even now, the predators are beginning to gather.

Important though it is, Brazil may prove to be something of a sideshow, because there is an even bigger danger lurking — the risk of a collapse in the dollar. As yet, this possibility has yet to embed itself in the psyche of the global markets, and indeed may sound counter-intuitive given that unemployment in the United States is still falling.

But this complacency may soon be punctured, and indeed there were the first signs last week that the suckers' rally of the past two months has come to an end. The lay-offs at Boeing brought home an uncomfortable truth, namely that the earnings growth which the stock market bulls use to justify rocketing share prices simply are not coming through.

In the end, of course, what is happening to earnings and profits cannot be divorced from stock market performance. Profits drive investment and employment, and as such are the key component of growth.

So what is happening to profits in the US "miracle economy"? Far from rising exponentially, they have been dropping for the past year and are now declining at an annual rate [illegible] per cent. Margins are being [illegible] by over-capacity, rising employment costs and a deceleration in productivity growth.

As Ian Harwood of Dresdner Kleinwort Benson put it at his firm's seminar last week: "The Q3 year-on-year profits decline is the first since the early 1990s recession and — if history is any guide — will produce a sharp economic slowdown, especially with the record corporate financing gap. Already capital expenditure plans are being cut, lay-offs are rising and new hiring slowing."

Mr Harwood's colleague, Albert Edwards, expanded on this theme. His view is that, price stability having been attained, global markets will have to get used to an "Ice Age" in which equity prices will be driven entirely by earnings.

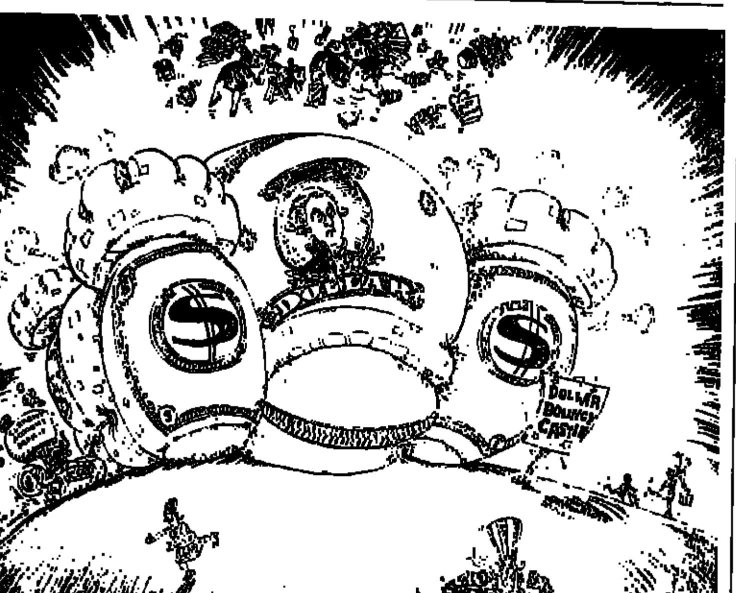
The absurd euphoria surrounding US technology stocks is a classic example of Wall Street's advanced state of denial. According to the analysts who continually badger American citizens to invest in mutual funds, the sky's the limit for these go-go stocks.

When these so-called experts sat down to compile their forecasts for 1998, in October 1997, they were in no doubt. Earnings per share (EPS) would rise by a whopping 32.2 per cent, fully justifying booming share prices.

By February, they were a bit more cautious, but not much. EPS growth was put at 23.2 per cent, a more than respectable performance, particularly in a time of low and falling inflation. In October, reality had intruded on this escapist fantasy. Earnings per share in the technology sector would not actually rise at all in 1998. In fact, EPS would drop by 2.4 per cent.

Any sane person might learn something from this and use the experience of what happened this year as a guide to what may be in store for the technology sector in 1999. Did this happen? Hardly. Whereas this February, analysts saw EPS growth of 26.6 per cent in 1999, by October they has pushed this up to 40 per cent. Such forecasts not only beggar belief, they verge on the criminally negligent.

"We believe the US economic and market conjuncture closely resembles the Asia economic catastrophe (formerly known as miracle) back in 1996," said Mr Edwards. "Excesses in the US have built up which inevitably will be corrected. The cycle has yet to be abolished. When adjustment does occur, the dollar should be watched closely."



Far from being a "new paradigm," the US bears all the hallmarks of a Mexico or a Thailand, only on a frighteningly colossal scale. For a start, it is running a vast and expanding current account deficit, which is being funded by flows of foreign capital. This hot money is attracted by the rise in US asset prices, which in turn are helping to fund excessive consumption by both businesses and individuals.

AT SOME point, this tail-chasing will stop. For the entire post-war period, the US has had the benefit of sitting on the world's only reserve currency. In less than a month's time that will change with the birth of the euro, and it is a stone-cold certainty that there will be a rebalancing of portfolios by global investors. This is not especially good news for Europe, which has no need of an appreciating currency, but it could prove to be the trigger for a run on the dollar.

From the market's point of view, it could become a one-way bet. A cheaper dollar would make New York an even less attractive place to park hot money. With the US economy dependent on the stock market, there would be pressure on the Federal Reserve to cut rates. All the recent evidence is that its chairman, Alan Greenspan, would be rather quicker to slash rates than the European Central Bank chiefs.

What would be the policy implications of this? Obviously, in the short run, a dollar currency crisis would be utterly disastrous, since it would choke off European exports and do immeasurable damage to the prospects of a Japanese recovery. But in the longer term the global crisis may have to arrive in America's backyard before anything serious is done to reform the world's financial system.

Robert Skidelsky, the biographer of Maynard Keynes, said at a recent Social Market Foundation seminar that in the first era of globalisation, between 1880 and 1914, there were plenty of financial crises, but these were confined to the periphery of the world economy, principally Latin America. The mood changed when the developed world became gripped by economic collapse between the wars.

"Clearly it was the spread of financial instability from the second-class to the first-class powers which spurred the demand for capital controls. For the first time unlimited capital mobility posed a serious threat to the core countries of the world economy.

"The interesting question is whether our world resembles more closely the world of the 1920s and early 1930s which shaped Keynes's views, or the pre-1914 world when international capital mobility did not give rise to much trouble."

An interesting question indeed. If it really is a pre-1914 world out there, there are enough worrying signs to suggest it may be one last glorious Edwardian summer.

In Brief

A SPECIAL session of the International Monetary Fund's policymaking Interim Committee is to be convened in Washington next month to implement emergency reforms and help head off a second bout of global economic turbulence. The move comes amid signs that the recent recovery in world markets is stalling. Meanwhile the World Bank said that more than a quarter of the population of developing countries — just over a billion people — will suffer falling living standards as a result of the crisis.

EUROPE'S central bankers ended months of complacency over the likely threat to the European economy from the global financial crisis when they announced a co-ordinated cut in interest rates, designed to boost growth and jobs across the continent. Germany and France led the way, cutting the cost of borrowing to 3 percent, and only Italy remained out of line, settling on a rate of 3.5 per cent.

THE creation of the world's largest industrial company was confirmed with the $77.2 billion alliance of Exxon and Mobil. The two groups aim to save $2.8 billion from their combined operating costs of $34 billion. The merger comes at a time when oil companies face a double bind — the lowest oil prices in more than 10 years and rising exploration costs.

Washington Post, page 17

GEC drove forward its "strategic reshaping" under chief executive Lord Simpson by announcing 1,500 job losses in low-tech areas of its telecoms and defence electronics business.

LEADING shareholders in Barclays are understood to be telling the bank's top executives that they should follow former chief executive Martin Taylor's plans to split the group and seek mergers for the retail and corporate banking business.

ROYAL Bank of Scotland reported profits of just over $1.6 billion, the highest yet achieved by a Scottish company.

FOREIGN EXCHANGES

	Sterling rates December 7	Sterling rates November 30
Australia	2.6624-2.6655	2.6326-2.6265
Austria	19.47-19.49	19.62-19.64
Belgium	57.09-57.18	57.54-57.63
Canada	2.5350-2.5376	2.5232-2.5260
Denmark	10.52-10.53	10.60-10.61
France	9.28-9.29	9.35-9.36
Germany	2.7688-2.7711	2.7897-2.7915
Hong Kong	12.79-12.80	12.77-12.78
Ireland	1.1184-1.1153	1.1224-1.1245
Italy	2,740-2,744	2,762-2,764
Japan	197.51-197.73	202.79-202.99
Netherlands	3.1206-3.1226	3.1454-3.1485
New Zealand	3.1587-3.1659	3.1254-3.1310
Norway	12.36-12.37	12.31-12.32
Portugal	283.87-284.23	286.02-286.41
Spain	235.65-235.82	237.34-237.65
Sweden	13.45-13.47	13.38-13.39
Switzerland	2.2685-2.2703	2.2954-2.2982
USA	1.6520-1.6526	1.6502-1.6510
ECU	1.4114-1.4130	1.4212-1.4228

FTSE100 Share index down 167.2 at 5679.7. FTSE 250 index down 149.2 at 4763.5. Gold up $0.75 at $296.60

The Washington Post

Protests Intensify in Israeli Jails

Lee Hockstader in Jerusalem

HUNDREDS of Palestinian prisoners demanding to be freed from Israeli jails launched a hunger strike in an intensifying protest that has inflamed Jews and Arabs alike.

With President Clinton scheduled to arrive in Israel on Saturday for a three-day visit, the Israeli-Palestinian peace agreement he brokered in Maryland last October is badly frayed. Violent street clashes have dominated media images in recent days, angry words are flying, and Israel has officially suspended further pullbacks from the occupied West Bank, a centerpiece of the U.S.-mediated deal.

American diplomats are worried that even if Clinton manages to patch things up while he is here, the peace pact could easily fall apart again after his departure. "It's hard to imagine that in this environment the trip can yield the reconciliation that Clinton had hoped would result from his visit," a U.S. official said.

On both sides, the drift toward confrontation appears so strongly driven by domestic politics that neither Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu nor Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat has had the stomach to stand up to his constituency.

For Netanyahu, as always, the issue is maintaining his wobbly governing coalition and ensuring his political survival. He faces vitriolic right-wing opposition to further West Bank withdrawals, as well as a scheduled vote to dissolve the Israeli parliament and call early elections. Mindful of the risk, Netanyahu declared last week that there would be no new Israeli pullbacks until the Palestinians fulfilled a handful of new demands.

Arafat, too, has problems at home. The deal he agreed to at the Wye River Plantation six weeks ago calls for the release of 750 Palestinian prisoners in Israeli jails but says nothing about which ones.

When Israel released the first batch of 250 last month, the Palestinians were outraged that they included 150 common criminals. The deal, said Arafat and his aides, was for political prisoners to be freed.

Free at last: But Israel is dragging its heels over Palestinian releases

Surely they did not bargain for days at Wye for the liberation of car thieves, said Ahmed Tibi, a Palestinian spokesman.

Not so, said Netanyahu, and the State Department concurred: Nowhere in the agreement does it specify that the freed detainees be political prisoners. But the American stance has done nothing to defuse the anger among Palestinians, for whom the issue of prisoners is visceral.

Last weekend it burst into the open with demonstrations throughout the West Bank, which were put down by Israeli troops firing lethal rubber-coated bullets, and tear gas. The scenes of the wounded being carted off, bloodied and grimacing in pain, were reminiscent of the Palestinian intifada, the uprising that ended six years ago. At the same time, hundreds of the prisoners began a hunger strike that was joined by some of their families.

Even as the West Bank was exploding, Arafat was in Stockholm delivering a measured, conciliatory speech before the Swedish parliament. The address seemed an attempt to put things back on track with the Israelis.

Choosing his words carefully and forgoing his usual threat to unilaterally declare an independent Palestinian state next May, Arafat called for "a new political discourse." He pledged to make no alliance with any state hostile to Israel, stressed his commitment to fight terrorism and promote Israel's security, and committed himself to work out differences with the Jewish state through negotiations. The Swedes applauded heartily and said the ball was now in the Israel's court.

Netanyahu rejected Arafat's overture and said the Palestinians must concede to Israel's position on the prisoners and rule out the option of declaring an independent state next May, when the Oslo peace process launched in 1993 expires.

China Threatens Internet Subversives with Prison

Michael Laris in Beijing

BEFORE he and his computer were whisked away by police in March, Shanghai entrepreneur Lin Hai spent his nights trolling the Internet for e-mail addresses he could use to promote his online headhunting service, jobchina.com, a clearing house of resumes from China's educated elite for international clients like Motorola and IBM.

Hoping to leverage his 30,000-strong e-mail database, one of the largest such private lists in China, Lin also posted ads on electronic bulletin boards offering to sell or exchange the addresses, and once got a dollar each for a portion of them.

Last week Lin was put on trial for his online activities. In China's first Internet subversion case, Lin was accused of "inciting the overthrow of state power" by allegedly providing part of his database to the Washington-based electronic magazine Chinese VIP Reference, a pro-democracy magazine sent to 120,000 e-mail addresses inside China every 10 days.

Chinese authorities closed the four-hour trial for "national security" reasons, but details of the proceedings have emerged through Lin's legal counsel.

"The lawyer said he didn't have a very good feeling — that things won't be good for Lin Hai and he will probably be found guilty," said Xu Hong, Lin's wife, who was questioned by police for six hours to prevent her from waiting outside the courthouse as she had planned. Police also "persuaded" one member of Lin's legal team not to attend the trial in the northeastern province of Liaoning, Xu said.

The trial painted a stark picture of a Chinese legal system caught between recent efforts at reforms and its old show-trial habits. While changes instituted last year in criminal procedure law allowed Lin's lawyers to present their side in court, they faced insurmountable obstacles in a trial that was clearly political.

No witnesses were allowed to testify in the secret proceedings. Prosecutors presented a list of 200 people who said they receive VIP Reference involuntarily. Prosecutors also described other evidence that was not produced in court. Lin's lawyers argued that a list of names is not proof that Lin provided the addresses, and said they should be allowed to see all evidence against their client. The three-judge panel overruled the defense lawyers.

Although Lin is not a dissident, he is being treated like one because his business model ran up against the Chinese government's growing unease about the free flow of ideas entering China via the Internet. While government policy continues to support the swift growth of the Internet, and the number of Chinese online has grown to 1.2 million and is expected to reach 10 million in five years, authorities in recent months have begun aggressively campaigning to increase surveillance on the network.

Lin's trial comes as police in three Chinese cities last week arrested and charged key organizers of the China Democratic Party in a significant move against China's fledgling opposition movement. Chinese authorities said that Xu Wenli, Qin Yongmin and Wang Youcai are suspected of "endangering state security."

China's vague laws on "state security" are used against opponents viewed as a threat to the Communist Party's monopoly on political power. Efforts began in June to found and officially register an opposition party. Chinese authorities had detained and released dozens of dissidents in the intervening months, but signaled last week through the arrests and stern public statements that they had lost patience.

Priests Face Crucifixion in Sudan

Karl Vick in Khartoum

WHEN Pope John Paul II paid a brief, cautious visit here five years ago, he summoned a powerful metaphor for the persecution that Christians often face under Sudan's aggressively Islamic regime, calling it "a particular reproduction of the mystery of Calvary." Now the Sudanese government is bringing the metaphor to life by threatening two Catholic priests with crucifixion.

The Rev. Hillary Boma and the Rev. Lina Tujano are charged with setting off almost a dozen bombs around Khartoum on June 30 in an alleged plot to mar official celebrations marking the anniversary of the 1989 coup that brought the National Islamic Front to power.

If convicted, they and 18 co-defendants could be crucified, under the medieval Islamic code that governs Sudan's legal system.

The priests' trial — actually a court-martial, held at army headquarters and closed to foreign journalists and diplomats — has been denounced by international human rights groups as a charade based on videotaped confessions likely produced under torture. Critics say that what the trial actually lays bare are the fears harbored by the regime.

Sudanese officials insist they have a genuine case, but acknowledge it combines a striking number of the elements viewed as threatening to the government.

The largest Christian denomination in this majority-Muslim nation of 32 million, the Catholic Church has steadily resisted the government's program of forced Islamization. It also has endured the repercussions. Priests report being stopped and interrogated by secret police on an almost monthly basis. Also routine is the bulldozing — 30 in the past eight years — of sanctuaries and schools by earthmovers guarded by truckloads of Sudanese soldiers.

The church serves mostly people from Sudan's south, a black African, largely Christian region that has been at war with the country's Arab, strongly Muslim north for 15 years. All but two of the priests' 18 co-defendants are southerners who, like an estimated 1.8 million others over the past 15 years, fled the fighting in the rural south and settled near Khartoum.

"They see southern Sudanese as a threat in Khartoum," said Ghazi Suliman, a leading human rights attorney and opposition leader. "They want to give a message to the southerners around Khartoum to leave. I think this is the plan — to displace them from Khartoum."

The timing of the bombings, independent observers say, suggests the government planned them. The blasts occurred not only on the anniversary of the 1989 coup, but also on the day President Omar Hassan Bashir signed a constitution that apparently opened the door to legal opposition parties, something Sudan has not had since 1989.

The political opening was greeted with widespread skepticism. One day before the devices exploded — in the middle of the night, injuring no one — a National Islamic Front official warned of "terrorist parties." Two days afterward, Bashir cited them in postponing the promised legalization of parties.

"Nobody believes it. It was fabricated by the government," said Nour Hammad, a teacher-turned-taxi driver in Khartoum.

The New York-based monitoring group Human Rights Watch noted that, before charging the priests and southerners, Sudanese security police rounded up 33 others, mostly opposition political figures.

"The timing of the arrests and statements by high government officials suggests the bombings served as a pretext to stop opposition political parties from reopening inside Sudan," the group said in a statement. The charges against the opposition figures were later dropped, and last week a new law was announced nominally reinstating a multi-party system — albeit one granting a presidentially appointed registrar the power to dissolve any party.

The priests assumed the role of prime suspects on August 1, when security police swept into St. Matthew's Cathedral to arrest Boma, chancellor of the Catholic archdiocese of Khartoum, who was accused of masterminding the plot.

When lawyers were finally permitted to see the suspects, shortly before their trial, all but one reported having been tortured and pleaded not guilty. Jemera Rone, the Human Rights Watch analyst for Sudan, said, "This is typical of what they do with priests."

Irate Jurors Give Notice to Independent Prosecutors

Bill Miller

THE jurors who last week acquitted former agriculture secretary Mike Espy had sharp words for independent prosecutor Donald C. Smaltz, saying his $17 million corruption case was an outrageous waste of taxpayers' money and an unfair assault on a man they felt was a motivated, effective leader.

"I hope that we sent a message to these independent counsels," said juror Anthony Young, a 43-year-old warehouse worker. "We, the American people, don't want any more of these trivial, petty cases. Seventeen million dollars for this? This was a travesty. Mr Espy could have been one of the greatest agriculture secretaries ever," he continued. "This was the weakest, most bogus thing I ever saw. I can't believe Mr. Smaltz ever brought this to trial."

Although some were more measured in their criticisms, four other jurors echoed Young's views, saying they sat for seven weeks in U.S. District Court waiting for evidence to emerge showing that Espy illegally took gifts from businesses and individuals. But time and again, they said, Smaltz failed to demonstrate that Espy had any criminal intent in taking sports tickets and other items and delivered no proof that Espy bestowed any favors. By the trial's end, some jurors said they were wondering why Espy was forced out of office by the White House in 1994 for what seemed a few errors in judgment.

"I tried to really understand what they were getting at," said Adrienne White-Powell, a 20-year-old office clerk. "I don't think it was until the second or third week that I started to realize that this was a bunch of bull."

White-Powell said she came to view Espy, who took office in 1993 as the nation's first African-American agriculture secretary, as a hard-driven public servant who was "working for the people." Smaltz, meanwhile, seemed to be stretching to make a case.

"He was just the worst," she said. "Even his closing argument — I was like, 'What is your purpose? What are you there for?'"

Smaltz did not return calls to his office seeking his version of the trial. But one of his assistants, William S. Noakes Jr., acknowledged, "If you draw anything from the jurors' comments, it is that we could have done the case in a clearer, simpler way and done a better job of tying it all up."

Espy was accused of illegally accepting roughly $35,000 in gifts from companies such as Tyson Foods Inc., Sun-Diamond Growers of California, Quaker Oats Co., and others. Jurors said prosecutors failed to show that Espy took anything "for or because of official acts," a key element to proving he violated gratuities laws. They said many of the items seemed to be given to Espy as acts of friendship.

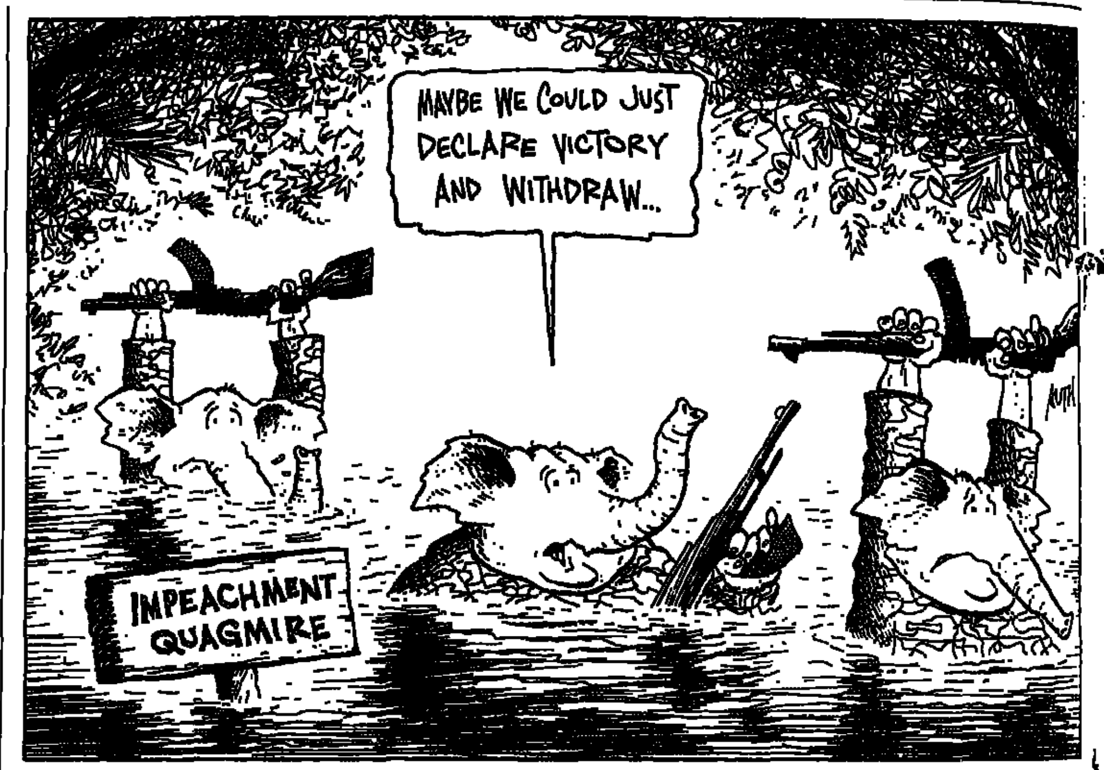
"I had likened the portrait the prosecution was painting to a 'connect-the-dots' picture," said Diane Clayton-Koontz, 37, a mortgage banker and the jury's foreperson. "[Smaltz] was placing the dots but never connecting them."

She said Smaltz appeared to use tremendous financial resources to bring 38 charges in hopes that one would stick, and contended that more control should be placed on independent counsels. "I can't fault him for pursuing the case with the zeal he pursued it because nobody ever stopped him," she said.

Defense lawyers Ted Wells and Reid H. Weingarten had portrayed Espy as a trail-blazer, noting he was the first African-American elected to Congress in his native Mississippi since Reconstruction and that he then made history at USDA. Two of Smaltz's witnesses described the agriculture department as a racist place.

That kind of testimony deeply concerned Smaltz. During the trial, he protested to Judge Ricardo M. Urbina that the defense was injecting race into the trial in what he saw as an appeal to a mostly black jury. Of the 12 people who ultimately decided the case, all but one was black. Defense lawyers denied playing any race cards, and the judge declined Smaltz's request to advise the jury that race was not an issue in this trial.

"That irritates me — some people are trying to pin some type of bias on this, and that wasn't the case," Clayton-Koontz said. "There was no one in that deliberation room who said, 'I want to acquit him because I feel sorry for him'. . . And his being black was not the issue. Many jurors were very incensed he had gotten himself into this position because of poor judgment."



Censure Is the Best Option

EDITORIAL

THE House impeachment inquiry now winding down had two main purposes. One was to underscore the fact that the president had lied under oath; the other was to establish whether he had gone further and obstructed justice by causing others to give false testimony, withhold evidence, etc.

The first issue, of lying, rests precisely where it did when the proceedings began. The committee Republicans appear determined to send one or more articles of impeachment regarding lying to the floor. That seems right to us. Before the recent mid-term elections, all but five members of the House thought there ought to be an inquiry. Now they should be the judge of the proceeds.

On the issue of whether the president obstructed justice the Judiciary Committee has failed utterly to establish any such thing. The proceedings have been a joke; the only substantive witness has been the independent counsel, whose elaborate conclusions as to obstruction, tampering and the like rest mainly on circumstantial and other evidence insufficient to remove a president from office. The committee, having developed no additional evidence, should drop the obstruction and related charges, as well as the dangerous notion that the president committed an impeachable offense — abuse of power — by even resisting the independent counsel's inquiries. All those charges are a stretch.

Given then that the only charge against the president that can be upheld is lying, we believe a resolution of censure should accompany any articles of impeachment to the floor. It ought to be toughly, unmistakably worded. There ought not be a way for the president to dispute its meaning or its importance.

Censure is not an ideal answer to this tangle. In some ways it is too weak a response to the president's offense, and we come to it with reservations.

But the arguments against impeachment are compelling. It would be enormously disruptive. The Senate would be unlikely to convict. The president has only two years left in his term, and impeachment would consume much of the first, prolonging this miserable matter for another year.

Mr. Clinton is flawed; he was also re-elected, and it is no small thing to reverse a national election result. The case arose from personal behavior, which to some degree was used by the president's ideological enemies in an effort to bring him down. It weakens the country if a president can be dislodged too easily. No matter that he could have obviated all the harm, prevented the entire occurrence, had he simply chosen to say forthrightly yes instead of no, told the truth instead of thinking he could once more duck it.

Some Republicans want to deny the House a chance to vote on censure. They think the case for impeachment will be strengthened if they deny members an alternative. It's the wrong way to conduct these proceedings: this is one issue on which the House ought not be cornered. It ought to be free to get to the result it wants.

Tough censure is not the perfect outcome. There isn't a perfect outcome here. But on the basis of the evidence as assembled by the independent counsel and committee, we grudgingly conclude that censure beats impeachment. We hope the House does the same.

Quebec Sends Ambiguous Messages to Rest of Canada

OPINION
E.J. Dionne Jr.

CANADIANS are engaged in one of the most remarkable experiments ever undertaken by a democracy: a peaceful, nearly three-decade-old debate over whether their country should continue to exist.

Quebec's voters made sure the issue will remain unresolved for a while longer. In their recent provincial elections, they gave a clear majority of legislative seats to the separatist Parti Quebecois, and gave a narrow plurality of the popular vote to the anti-separatist Liberal Party.

By winning a majority of seats (because much of the Liberal vote was concentrated in predominately English-speaking districts), the party of separatist Premier Lucien Bouchard will continue to run Quebec's government. But the results provided no mandate for the separation Bouchard seeks.

If the voters sent any message, it was one of ambiguity and ambivalence; exactly what Quebecers seem to feel toward their status within Canada. And Bouchard played on that ambiguity brilliantly. In theory, he supported yet a third referendum on Quebec's sovereignty. But he made it clear he would only call a referendum if he sensed "winning conditions." In other words, you could vote for him whether you wanted a referendum or not.

His campaign slogan — "*J'ai confiance*," or "I have confidence" — was equally brilliant in its ambiguity. It could mean simple confidence in Bouchard's government which, despite unpopular health care cuts (Bouchard apologized for them), stands well with Quebec's voters. But it also touched a psychological chord among French-speaking Quebecers: that they have confidence in themselves to go it alone if they must.

For federalists — those who want Quebec to stay in Canada — the results were both a disappointment and a relief. They rallied behind Jean Charest, the leader of the Quebec Liberals, because it was thought that if anyone could stem the separatist tide, it was Charest.

But he was out-campaigned by Bouchard, and he made the mistake of pledging to reduce government involvement in Quebec's economy — a bad move in this pro-government province. Yet Charest still did far better than the polls had predicted.

My forebears came to the United States from Quebec. French is my first language, and I spent some childhood summers there. So, I suspect, my attitudes on these matters are close to those of many Quebecers.

Quebec is culturally distinct from the rest of Canada and should be recognized as such. It would be a good country if it chose to become one. But it's also true that Canada is a fine and decent country, and its breakup would be a great loss.

Understand that ambiguity, and you understand why Quebecers keep pushing for separation, yet keep pulling away from the final act.

The rest of Canada is tired of the fight. "It's time to pull away from the obsession," wrote Catherine Ford of the Calgary Herald, in a column reprinted in the National Post. "It is easy to focus on the 'Quebec problem' because the lines of this play are well-rehearsed."

Worse for Canada, every new discussion about granting Quebec more powers distorts the national debate. Whatever powers Quebec wants, some of the other provincial governments want too, as Ford points out. New negotiations are about to begin on giving the provinces more power over social service programs.

Devolution in these matters may or may not be a good idea. But this sort of devolution is not what motivates separatist sentiment in Quebec. It's rooted in culture, language and distinctiveness, not in funding formulas.

Canada and Quebec need to settle the fundamental question: Is the rest of Canada willing to give formal recognition to Quebec's distinctiveness within the federation? And is Quebec willing to settle for that?

Size Matters, Say Oil Giants

Steven Mufson

PETROLEUM geologists have trekked to the frozen Arctic, the blazing Arabian deserts, the jungles of South America and the hurricane-prone waters of the Gulf of Mexico in search of what they call "elephants", the giant oil reservoirs that can become money mints for big oil companies.

But last week Exxon Corp. found an elephant in a less harsh environment: the board room of Mobil Corp. For a price of $81 billion in Exxon stock and assumed debt, Exxon obtained 4.1 billion barrels of crude oil reserves, almost as much again in natural gas reserves, and an array of oil refineries, gasoline stations and chemical businesses.

With that stroke, it created the world's largest company and gave new meaning to the phrase "Big Oil", which critics often use to describe the heftiest oil firms. The combined Exxon-Mobil will have crude oil production that outstrips Nigeria or any one of several other members of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries. Its revenue will be bigger than the gross domestic product of all but 23 countries. It will be the world's largest retailer of gasoline, with about 47,500 stations. And it will have a profit of nearly $12 billion.

Despite the huge size of the new company, Exxon and Mobil executives say the goal of the merger is self-preservation rather than domination. Engulfed by a slump in oil prices, faced with the ever-present pressure to replace oil reserves, and confronted by recent mergers among their rivals, the two giants say they can better compete together than separately.

The combination of Exxon and Mobil establishes a top tier in the oil industry, which is already dominated by expanding giants like British Petroleum (which is in the midst of buying Amoco) and the Royal Dutch/Shell Group, which recently merged its U.S. marketing operations with Texaco Inc. Analysts say the Exxon-Mobil merger will only speed the oil industry's trend from big to behemoth.

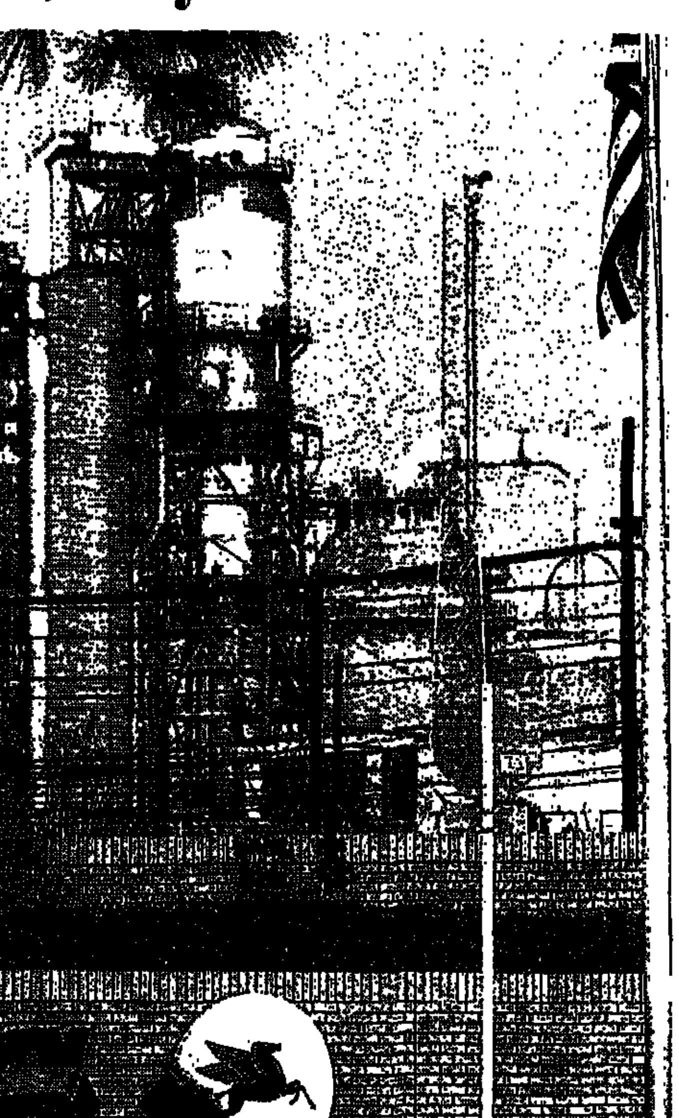
"We'll come out of this with three, four or five big private companies and a bunch of state oil companies," said Phillip Verleger, an oil industry consultant with Boston's Brattle Group. "If you want a paradigm, look at the airline industry; we saw 20 or so private companies contract into four or five and a few national carriers."

Some industry critics fear the emergence of the new leviathans will mean higher prices for consumers by reducing competition in gasoline retailing. They say studies show that prices are significantly higher in places like San Diego, where there are fewer gasoline retailers, than in Los Angeles, where there are more.

Exxon-Mobil combined would have a 16.8 percent share of the U.S. gasoline market, according to the Petroleum Finance Co., a consulting firm. Moreover, the three biggest firms — BP-Amoco, Shell-Texaco, and Exxon-Mobil — would dominate the American gasoline retailing market with a 38 percent share. Because they usually focus on certain areas, the share could be larger in certain places. Mobil has a 9 percent national market share, but it only markets gasoline in 28 states.

But oil executives and many analysts argue that the current consolidation is driven by survival, making the oil industry perhaps the richest industry ever to cry poor.

Oil prices, when adjusted for inflation, are at their lowest level since the Great Depression, says Daniel Yergin, author of The Prize, a history of the oil industry. The balance between supply and demand has been turned on its head. Asia's economic slump, Iraq's partial return to oil markets, increased supplies from west Africa, and increased natural gas usage has knocked the bottom out of the oil market. That has squeezed profit margins at the big oil companies despite technology-driven reductions in costs.



Mobil: Now part of the world's largest company PHOTO: PAT SULLIVAN

AIDS Threatens to Wipe Out 50 Years of Progress

Lester R. Brown

WHEN United Nations' demographers released their global population projections last October, they shocked the world. The projections were substantially lower, partly because of AIDS' devastating toll. The massive rise in deaths now predicted in many countries marks a tragic new development in world demography.

These projections are the first to use the World Health Organization's new data on HIV infection rates: in some countries in sub-Saharan Africa, a staggering one-fifth to one-fourth of the adult population is HIV-positive. In Zimbabwe, it is 26 percent; Botswana 25 percent; and in Namibia, Swaziland and Zambia it is 18 to 20 percent.

Barring a medical miracle, these countries will lose one-fifth or more of their adult population to AIDS within the next decade. To find a precedent, we must go back to the 16th century, when smallpox decimated New World Indians, or to the 14th century, when roughly a third of Europe's population died of bubonic plague.

Industrial countries have been able to hold HIV infection rates among the adult population under 1 percent, but rates are soaring in developing countries, where governments often cannot muster the leadership energy and fiscal resources to cope.

Social problems routinely managed in industrial societies are becoming full-scale humanitarian crises in many developing ones. As a result, some of the latter are now headed for population stability or even decline in a matter of years, not because of falling birthrates but because of fast-rising death rates. Rising AIDS fatalities could bring Zimbabwe's population growth to a halt as early as 2002. Life expectancy in Botswana is projected to drop from the historic high of 61 years in 1990 to 41 years in 2000.

In addition to adult deaths from AIDS, some 30 percent of infants of HIV-positive mothers are born with the virus; their life expectancy is two years. The epidemic is also creating a new population subset — AIDS orphans, already numbering 7.8 million in sub-Saharan Africa.

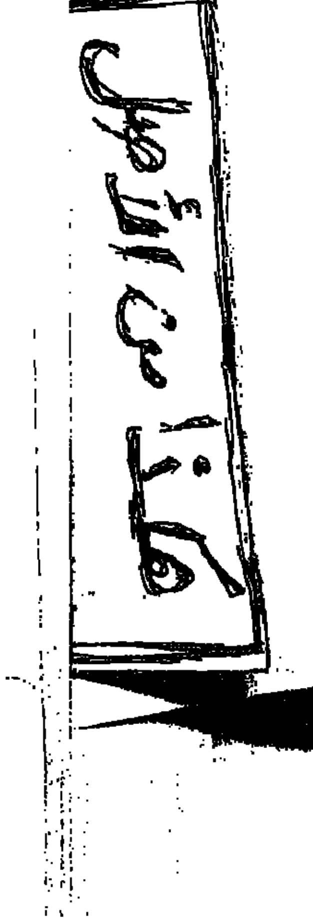
The epidemic's social and economic effects are just starting to materialize. Unlike most potentially fatal infectious diseases, AIDS takes its toll not so much among the very young and the elderly but among young professionals — the very engineers, agronomists and teachers needed to develop the economy. Indeed, the precipitous drop in life expectancy, the sentinel indicator of economic development, could erase half a century of progress almost overnight. (See "Beyond Malthus" at www.worldwatch.com.)

Two lessons need to be learned. One, the key to control is attacking the disease early before it spirals out of control; and two, population growth must be slowed before demographic fatigue overwhelms even more governments.

Thailand and Uganda, where the epidemic was treated as an emergency, successfully curbed the virus' spread through an intense educational effort and the free distribution of condoms.

Family planning programs and condom distribution are keys to controlling the spread of infection. But just days before the U.N. projections were released, a little-noticed amendment — inserted into the budget at the last minute by the U.S. congressional leadership — cut off all funding for the U.N. Population Fund, the chief source of international family planning assistance. Congress, mired in the quicksand of anti-abortion politics, is depriving developing countries of the help they need.

The HIV epidemic should be seen for what it is: an emergency of epic proportions that could claim more lives early in the next century than World War II did. Any decision to withhold assistance in controlling it should not be taken lightly.



Shop Till You Drop

Jonathan Yardley

IN SAM WE TRUST
The Untold Story of Sam Walton
And How Wal-Mart Is Devouring America
By Bob Ortega
Times Books. 413pp. $25.95

FOR six years Bob Ortega has covered Wal-Mart for the Wall Street Journal, a publication one would expect to be sympathetic to that paradigmatic example of American capitalism at its most efficient and successful, but his own slant is made abundantly clear by the title and subtitle of this book. Though Ortega finds much to admire in Wal-Mart and its late founder, Sam Walton, he is deeply skeptical about the paternalistic culture Walton constructed and about the many ways Wal-Mart has imprinted itself upon, and altered, the American landscape.

There is nothing new about any of this. Wal-Mart bashing is almost as old as Wal-Mart itself, i.e., three-and-a-half decades and counting. All its real and imagined sins — selling goods made by child labor in Third World countries, passing off imported goods as American-made, selling products smuggled from China and, most particularly, despoiling the countryside and running innocent small entrepreneurs out of business — have been hashed over, and over, and over.

If anything, in telling how Wal-Mart rose from inauspicious beginnings in an Arkansas hamlet called Bentonville to become king of the retailing jungle, with 3,400 stores and 728,000 employees, Ortega inadvertently suggests that he may have written the wrong book. Success stories are, if not exactly a dime a dozen, sufficiently commonplace to make his recitation of Sam Walton's various magic formulas seem just another page out of the annals of capitalism triumphant. Rather, the really interesting tale is that of Kmart, which when Walton opened his first store was miles ahead of everyone else yet fell, within a quarter-century, so far behind Wal-Mart as to be almost invisible.

As Ortega demonstrates in what are far and away the most revealing and interesting sections of In Sam We Trust, Kmart was done in not merely by Wal-Mart's vigorous and ingenious competition but by its own complacency, stupidity and ineptitude. Like Wal-Mart, Kmart was essentially the brainchild of a single inspired, obsessed man — this one's name was Harry Cunningham — who shaped the firm to suit the images in his mind and ran it brilliantly until his retirement. After that it fell into the hands of a succession of corporate bureaucrats. Many of these were timid and self-protective; almost none of them had the slightest grasp of the rapid changes that were occurring in the American marketplace and in technology that by the late 1960s was beginning to make it possible to track inventory instantaneously and to distribute replacement goods with similar dispatch.

Kmart was set up to serve the suburbs and the automobile that had created them while Wal-Mart catered to the small towns that national corporations thought unworthy of their attentions. But both were in the same business — discount retailing — and both, by the time Wal-Mart had emerged as serious competition, had ample resources on which to draw. But while Wal-Mart stayed lean and alert to the needs and tastes of its customers — Walton, like the ruler of the queen's navee, polished up the handle on the big front door, or made sure someone else did — Kmart slid into shabbiness and it "relaxed into complacency about its assortment of merchandise." It is hard to imagine a more self-incriminatory comment than the one made by its would-be savior, Joe Antonini, who said, "It's depressing to visit an old store, even if I must say so." Well, it was depressing to shop at one, too, which is why millions of Americans stopped.

Instead they went to Wal-Mart, which saw its opportunity and moved into the suburbs once ruled by Kmart. Founded on seemingly simple principles — "Offer the lowest possible price. Be bigger. Keep your costs lower. Make any other considerations secondary" — which demanded eternal vigilance, Wal-Mart was an astonishingly efficient machine against which Kmart, with "its antiquated system of having managers at each of the company's 673 stores fill out order books by hand and mail in each day's invoices to headquarters," was dead meat. In 1987, when Antonini took over Kmart, "it held 35 percent of the discount retail market; Wal-Mart held 20 percent. Seven years later, when he left, Kmart held 23 percent; Wal-Mart, 42 percent."

This is the meat of Ortega's story, and he tells it well. The rest of it may interest people who are trying to fabricate businesses of their own, for the Wal-Mart example is tempting and perhaps instructive, though absent the particular, peculiar genius of Sam Walton, none of them is likely to succeed. Nothing is forever. Not even Wal-Mart.

All the World's His Stage

John F. Andrews

SHAKESPEARE
The Invention of the Human
By Harold Bloom
Riverhead Books. 745pp. $35

DURING a recent conference, a critic best known for his annotated edition of Shakespeare's Sonnets (1977) opened a witty address with the arresting assertion that Shakespeare is history's most underrated poet. Illustrating his remarks with examples of the dramatist's astonishing verbal ingenuity, Stephen Booth then proceeded to show that, notwithstanding the veneration our greatest playwright has enjoyed over the four centuries of his largely uncontested domination of the literary and dramatic pantheon, he's even more brilliant than we've always considered him to be. That, no doubt, is why he continues to delight new generations of readers and audiences with marvels that previous admirers have failed to register.

Now comes Harold Bloom, the Sterling Professor of Humanities at Yale University, with an even bolder proposition: that "Shakespeare, by inventing what has become the most accepted mode for representing character and personality in language, thereby invented the human as we know it."

According to Bloom, "Shakespeare is the original psychologist, and Freud the belated historian." Through characters such as Hamlet, who "has made us skeptics in our relationships," and Falstaff, who instructs us in "a comprehensiveness of humor that avoids unnecessary cruelty," and Cleopatra, "archetype of the star, the world's first celebrity," and the woman "through whom the playwright taught us how complex eros is," we've acquired many of the insights that guide us in a ceaseless quest to comprehend our myriad natures. Without Shakespeare, if Bloom is to be believed, "our ideas would be different, particularly our ideas of the human, since they were, more often than not, Shakespeare's ideas before they were ours."

The pleasure this affords comes at the price of a regrettable accumulation of exasperation

Bloom is a formidable presence, with more than 20 books and a panoply of laurels to his credit. Over the last decade he has emerged as a pivotal figure in the culture wars and in 1994 The Western Canon became a bestseller.

According to Shakespeare: The Invention Of The Human, the author who "already was the Western canon" — or at least the author who had long been the anchor who secured a received core of fundamental classics and thereby helped stabilize a measure of spiritual and philosophical coherence — "is now becoming central to the world's implicit canon." That, says Harold Bloom, is because "Shakespeare's influence, overwhelming on literature, has been even larger on life." It "surpasses the effect" of such Greek masterpieces as the works of Homer and Plato, and it "challenges the scriptures of West and East alike" in its impression upon "the modification of human character and personality." And why? Because "here at last we encounter an intelligence without limits. As we read Shakespeare, we are always engaged in catching up, and our joy is that the process is never-ending: he is still out ahead of us."

Bloom has no patience for today's contextualizing "reductionists." He's persuaded that they tend to "mistake the truth totally," and he therefore dismissively consigns all avant-garde directors, among them the widely acclaimed Peter Brook, and the majority of his academic coevals to what Bloom labels "the School of Resentment," a cacophonous loony bin for Shakespeare-envying "Marxists, multiculturalists, feminists, [and] nouveau historicists" who diminish the playwright to whatever the practitioner of a given "ism" is seeking to isolate in a text that has been commandeered for less than noble purposes.

Harold Bloom seems to be in sympathy with few of his contemporaries, and one comes away from his latest book with the sense that he would much rather engage in putative discourse with such exalted predecessors as Samuel Johnson, William Hazlitt, A.C. Bradley, W.H. Auden and G. Wilson Knight than to bother attending conscientiously to anything he might experience in the books, articles, films, theater and television productions of most of his younger colleagues.

They, in turn, will probably feel little incentive to bestow much credence upon the deliberations of an eminence grise who treats them with undisguised contempt. He and his publisher will be taken to task for their neglect to supply such minimal courtesies as an index, a set of footnote citations, and a bibliographical listing of the small cadre of current professionals whom Bloom deigns to single out by name.

More importantly, Bloom will be reminded that there is a crucial distinction between a random assortment of insufficiently supported generalizations — a number of them so eloquent and memorable as to rise to the level of aphorism, but far too many of them in an Olympian tone that might have struck John Keats as a travesty of the quality he once defined as the "egotistical sublime" — and a responsible attempt to assemble and organize enough pertinent material to prove that a grand but problematical hypothesis is founded upon anything more substantial than its author's often dazzling but occasionally quirky connoisseurship.

This could have been an important contribution to our appreciation of a significant heritage. Unfortunately I fear that the pleasure it affords most readers will come at the price of a regrettable accumulation of exasperation.

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Paperbacks

The Blues: From Robert Johnson To Robert Cray, by Tony Russell (Schirmer, $18)

"I'M THE only man in the world that plays the accordion upside-down," the late Rockin' Dopsie (pronounced "Doopsy") once declared. "It's all because daddy didn't taught me how to play. I just picked it up." The left-handed accordionist is one of many lesser-known blues masters included in Tony Russell's extensive, photo-rich book. The immortals — B.B. King, Muddy Waters, et al. — are here as well. Russell has fashioned his book as a user's guide for both aficionados and newcomers to the blues. He writes in his introduction, "The aim has been to convey the sweep of blues history from Los Angeles to London and from Papa Charlie Jackson to Stevie Ray Vaughan, duly noting the great and good but not tilting the balance too much in favour of the dead."

Shaking a Leg: Collected Writings, by Angela Carter (Penguin, $15.95)

IT'S been said that Angela Carter — magic realist, feminist, iconoclast — has become the most popular dissertation subject in Great Britain. Carter would have smiled at that, for she was the least academic of writers, being brilliantly unconventional, widely traveled and deeply English. Certainly her revisionist fairy tales, collected in The Bloody Chamber and other books, can be shocking, but novels like Nights At The Circus and Wise Children might easily be called charming, in all senses of the word. Since Carter's early death from cancer, Viking and Penguin have published her collected stories, and that essential volume is now followed by this gathering of Carter's book reviews, essays and articles. Sex, Japan, clothes, food, work, art, Sade, movies, America, Borges, animals — the range of her interests is quite dazzling. She is the voice of an entire generation.

Chat :-), Connect }:-), and Crash ;-), all by Nan McCarthy (Pocket, $6 each)

NAN McCarthy's trilogy tracing the romantic adventures of Bev and Max began as a single self-published novel and grew into a series that has attracted a cult of cyber-savvy fans. Bev, a hard-charging book editor, and Max, a restless ad copywriter, first meet online, and the results aren't promising: "I wasn't trying to pick you up," Max protests. "I don't do cybersex, and you could be a real toad for all I know." Bev retorts: "I am not a toad, for your information. You, on the other hand, are probably wearing a smelly jogging suit with your butt hanging out the back and Cheetos crumbs hanging off your beard." But when they meet at a Macworld confab their mingling is electric. The two become lovers who must decide if they want to spend the rest of their lives together. "I think you've known from the beginning that I fell in love with you the first night we met," Max tells Bev. "In fact I think I had begun to fall in love with cyberyou before I had actually met the realyou, even though I didn't know at the time that the cyberyou *is* the realyou." Each volume includes a glossary of "abbreviations, acronyms, and emoticons" to assist readers not yet fluent in cyberspeak.

GUARDIAN WEEKLY
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Jospin faces a dismal winter

Jean-Michel Aphatie and Michel Noblecourt

ANSWERING a parliamentary question on December 2, the French prime minister, Lionel Jospin, gave MPs the following piece of advice: "When you come up against a problem, gentlemen, you can deal with it in two ways: either you can say: 'I am upright in my boots'" — a reference to the phrase used in July 1995 by the beleaguered Alain Juppé, who was then prime minister — "or you can choose to adjust to the situation and say: 'I am flexible in my trainers'."

Flexibility is a quality Jospin will need if he is to negotiate the increasing number of obstacles in his way. On December 2, during the prime minister's customary informal conversation with the president before the cabinet meeting, Jacques Chirac told Jospin that he would refuse to call a congress (a meeting of deputies and senators empowered to adopt the justice reform bill) until the government had put the full text of the bill before parliament.

Chirac maintained that, unless the full implications of the legislative reform were revealed to deputies and senators, they might abstain, thus jeopardising the three-fifths majority the reform needs go through. The government, which is determined not to change its parliamentary agenda, responded angrily. The justice minister, Elisabeth Guigou, accused Chirac trying to cover up divisions on the justice reform issue within the opposition parties, the neo-Gaullist Rassemblement pour la République (RPR) and the centre-right Union pour la Démocratie Française (UDF). And she claimed that Chirac had already "agreed to the overall reform of the law".

She then asked the opposition whether they would "dare to continue to oppose a reform that has the backing of the president and the government". At this point, Jospin intervened: "The justice minister simply highlighted a rather cruel contradiction. It is the opposition that is opposing a bill which the president, on the basis of a government proposal, said he approved of."

Race for the presidency in 2002 . . . 'I am flexible in my trainers!'

On the issue of the reform of the broadcasting system, problems came up when it was announced that the bill proposed by the culture minister, Catherine Trautmann, was to be postponed. Daniel Vaillant, government spokesman and minister for relations with parliament, said the reforms were necessary, but he refused to say when the bill, which was supposed to be debated on December 15, would come before parliament. He simply asked for "time". Jospin's pluralist coalition should be able to use that time-lag to settle its internal disagreements about the bill.

Another problem has been the endless wrangling over the government's proposed reform, known as Pacs, that would enable unmarried couples, including homosexuals, to enjoy the same benefits as married people. After its first article was adopted, the first reading of the Pacs bill was postponed until December 8, with four articles and 100-odd amendments still to be debated.

All these problems have surfaced as Jospin is beginning to face a gloomier political environment. There are fresh worries about the economy: industrial unrest looks likely after railway traffic was disrupted in 17 regions by a labour dispute. And associations of jobless have again started to demonstrate for increased welfare payments.

All these developments could cause splits in the ruling pluralist left. On top of that, there is continuing disagreement over how to deal with illegal immigrants who have not yet been regularised. The prospect of European elections in seven months' time may tempt certain Greens or Communists to turn up the heat. It is hardly surprising, in that context, that the first Secretary of the Socialist Party, François Hollande, who favours a much more "human" approach to the problem of regularising immigrants, has more than once insisted that the European election campaign "will not get going for several months".

(December 4)

Dumas blames his legal troubles on the press

EDITORIAL

IS ROLAND Dumas really the victim of a press conspiracy? The president of the Constitutional Council — who was also a former foreign minister under President François Mitterrand — recently accused the press of subjecting him to a "campaign of denigration", which had "more to do with a personal vendetta than with any actual court case". Some of our readers agree, and have suggested that Le Monde actually masterminded a campaign against Dumas.

In a democracy, a free and independent press should not resort to self-censorship in an attempt to avoid stepping on people's toes. Its job is to inform, even at the risk of challenging its readers' mindsets and loyalties. It must continually strike a balance between the public's right to know and an individual's right to privacy.

Dumas has been charged in connection with a corruption case. Le Monde has regularly reported on new developments in the investigations into that case, as it has always done with any sensitive case that might have implications for French public life. Whether those investigations concern rightwing politicians like the mayor of Paris, Jean Tiberi, or leftwingers like Dumas, our approach has always been the same: to report on the investigating magistrates' work accurately and rigorously, to give the defence's side of the case, and to respect the rule that a person is presumed innocent until proved guilty.

Dumas knows that full well. He agreed to see us on several occasions from the end of 1997 until the beginning of 1998; he regularly answered our telephone calls until last summer; and we have always offered him the opportunity to state his case in the columns of Le Monde in whatever form he chooses. But in the past few weeks the Dumas affair has become more than a mere legal issue. The publication of La Putain de la République (The Republic's Whore) by Dumas's former lover, Christine Deviers-Joncour, has brought into the public arena a question that is no longer about the presumption of innocence, but about the respectability of a crucial French institution: the Constitutional Council.

The council is the very keystone of our democratic edifice. According to the constitution, it is a body which ensures that the president of the republic, and its deputies and senators, are fairly elected, and that election campaign funding is above board. No appeal can be lodged against the council's rulings, which have to be obeyed by the government and all administrative and jurisdictional authorities.

Moreover, during the council's secret deliberations, its president has the casting vote. In other words, Dumas heads the only body that can call into question or cancel universal suffrage. Such undivided power carries obligations with it. In so far as he represents an institution whose high repute presupposes that it is unimpeachable, he must himself be unimpeachable. Yet on his own admission Dumas failed to declare to the tax authorities sums which he describes as "trifling", but which were in fact substantial.

In other words, he saw no need to comply with the legal obligations incumbent on any citizen. That element alone of the Dumas affair should be enough to justify his resignation. If not, neither the Constitutional Council nor those who sit on it will in future enjoy the authority that their weighty responsibilities require.

(November 28)

Christmas comes to Cuba

Jean-Michel Caroit
In Santo Domingo

THE Castro regime has made yet another gesture towards the Catholic church by reinstating Christmas as a public holiday in the Cuban calendar. From 1969 on, December 25 was regarded as a day like any other. Then in 1997 it was declared a one-off public holiday so preparations could be made for the Pope's visit to Cuba in last January.

But now the politburo of the Cuban Communist party (CCP) has declared that, "from this year on, every December 25 will be regarded as a public holiday".

In a "declaration" of more than 2,000 words published on the front page of Granma, the official CCP organ, the politburo wrote: "Despite imperialism's efforts to exploit religious sentiments for counter-revolutionary purposes, an anti-religious spirit has never been a feature of the Cuban revolution."

Cuba's leaders explained that the "suspension" of Christmas in 1969 had been motivated by the need to mobilise hundreds of thousands of workers in order to achieve the target of 10 million tonnes that their "commander-in-chief", Fidel Castro, had set for that year's sugar harvest. "In a tropical country like Cuba, December is a cool, dry month suitable for farm work, which is not the case in northern countries, because they are covered in snow at that time of year."

They explained that today, as a result of mechanisation, the sugar harvest no longer requires so much manpower in December. The reinstatement of Christmas was "a mark of consideration and respect for the most wholesome feelings and wishes of many of our fellow citizens", and well worth "the sacrifice of tens of millions of pesos in wages and in unprovided goods and services".

The politburo reminded readers that "Cuba's Socialist constitution, which was approved by 97.7 per cent of voters in 1976 and given a facelift in 1992, guarantees religious freedom". It did admit, though, that the exclusion of believers from the ranks of the CCP during the early years of the revolution "had undoubtedly been discriminatory".



Communism converted: the Pope's visit changed Castro's mind

Times have certainly changed. Castroist leaders now stress the similarities between Christian values and their own struggle in favour of a "lasting and truly solidarity-inspired form of globalisation". As an example of that revolutionary solidarity, which has much in common with Christian charity, they mentioned the fact that Cuba recently sent 2,000 doctors to Central American countries devastated by Hurricane Mitch.

Christian morality is now regarded by the Cuban regime as a bulwark against declining values and mounting delinquency. In an article published recently by the Catholic journal, Aqui la Iglesia, Cardinal Jaime Ortega expressed concern at the large number of "callous crimes". "Drugs have surreptitiously appeared on the scene" in the wake of prostitution and the rising burglary rate.

The authorities recognise that the opening up of Cuba to mass tourism and the partial dollarisation of the economy are phenomena that carry a "social cost". They have tried to cope with the problem by both cracking down on lawbreakers and organising campaigns of "ideological purity". In the politburo's view, "a day of rest and family reunion" at Christmas will also contribute to "the unity of the people" and a strengthening of values.

(December 3)

Letter that broke the spirit of a man down on his luck

Jean-Paul Besset

ROBERT was 38 and determined to get back on his feet. After he had spent years roughing it, there was a glimmer of hope: he had got on a training course, found himself a little bedsit and registered for income support. But then on November 1 he got letter No 728001 from the Toulouse social services: "We granted you an advance of 1,069 francs [$190] on your income support for September 1998 in the expectation of receiving your statement of income. We have not yet received it . . . You therefore owe us 1,069 francs, which should be repaid as soon as possible."

Eleven days later, Robert killed himself. In his suicide note, he wrote: "I've had enough. I did everything I could to get out of this mess, but this has really done me in."

He left 71 handwritten pages on which he had scrawled his thoughts: "This story is part of the lives of all of us. Every day I get up, look for work, and find nothing. But I tell myself that tomorrow could be my lucky day."

Robert was hardly born into the lap of luxury, but his childhood was almost "normal": "We got more or less all the little treats we wanted." The problems started when his father became disabled and his epileptic mother was made redundant. At the age of 16 Robert got a job as a factory worker. He went through a bad patch after falling ill, but recovered and got taken on by a building firm. Eight years later the firm went bust and his father died. He found himself out of a job and on his own with his virtually bedridden mother.

"I admit I ran away from it all. I literally left my mother in the lurch. I started on the road that led to me becoming homeless."

Robert began to drift. He got odd jobs, but mostly he was unemployed. He took to drink. He felt "so pathetic" with his trembling hands that he cut off all contact with his relatives. "I was so ashamed I rubbed out all traces of myself." He ended up in Toulouse, where he managed to get on income support. "I used to blow it all and then go begging . . . to buy booze and cigarettes."

A ray of sunshine came into Robert's life in 1997, when he met a priest, Bernard Berthuit, who used to invite the homeless for a cup of coffee at his presbytery in the Saint-Cyprien district of Toulouse. It was there that Robert met Monika: "She was tall and slim — I don't need to tell you more about her." He called her "my little angel". He stopped drinking, went on a building training course and began seeing his relatives again. He managed to get back on income support in 1998 and moved into a tiny bedsit. Every day he went out looking for a job, but with no luck. Then he got letter No 728001 from the social services. It probably so depressed him he did not notice its final sentence: "If you have a problem, don't hesitate to get in touch with us."

(November 28)

Life is the pits for Russian coal miners

François Bonnet in Vorkuta



Protesting for pay . . . but Russia's coal miners are still waiting for their wages

VORKUTA is a remote Russian mining town of 180,000 inhabitants that lies 200km north of the Arctic Circle, at the point where the Urals give way to expanses of tundra. For nine months of the year it is a snowbound place where the whiteness contrasts with the towering plumes of black smoke that rise from its power stations and smouldering slag heaps.

"Without our coal mines, this place would be dead," says Vorkuta's mayor, Igor Shpektor. Vladimir Shushkov, director of the Severnyi mine, agrees: "If the mines closed, we'd have to evacuate everyone."

Vorkuta is not so much a town as a sprawling and dilapidated industrial zone. It produces some of the highest-grade coal in Russia. There are no roads to Vorkuta: its only link with the rest of Russia is one plane a day and a railway line that brings in food and takes out coal.

"When I started here as a miner in 1958, Vorkuta seemed an impossible place to live in," says 61-year-old Sergei Shmarlovsky. "In January and February the temperature can plunge to -50C. In those days there were still camps around the pitheads. We worked in the mines with former *zeks* [gulag prisoners] who had been freed in 1953 or 1956 but were not allowed to leave Vorkuta."

From 1931 on, Vorkuta was one of Stalin's largest and grimmest gulags. Hundreds of thousands of prisoners died there. "They say there's a *zek* under every railway sleeper," Shmarlovsky says.

But although still haunted by the spectre of the gulag, Vorkuta's 32,000 miners cherish another vivid memory — that of a pioneering city which played a heroic part in the construction of socialism and became a kind of eldorado for the working-class élite that was treated so well during the Brezhnev years.

The imposing Miners' Palace, with its frescoes celebrating the worker setting off to hew coal, and bas-reliefs of Lenin pointing the way to the pithead, still has a certain majesty. "We used to have everything — flowers, grapes, Georgian wine," say Viktor, who came to Vorkuta in 1961.

It was partly because many miners could still remember that lost golden age that they decided, after putting up with pay arrears going back to November 1997, to block several railway lines in the Urals last May and to camp in front of the White House in Moscow from June to October.

"Come on, you chaps. We may be in a mess now, but things should be better in two years, don't you think?" quips Lilya Ivanovna, who for the past 15 years has been in charge of the technicians' and managers' changing rooms at the Severnyi mine, 20km out of town. Lilya puts away the working clothes of those who come up from the coal face, serves tea and generally bosses "her men" around.

"Yes, it was great 10 years ago; we earned a good living and there was a spirit of competition. Well, I'm the patient sort — I was born in the north. We're bound to get a decent living one day or other."

Ivanovna is not the worst off of the people who work for Vorkuta-Ugol, the 85 per cent state-owned company that runs the eight mines still in operation. She has retired — which does not stop her continuing to work. Although she is no longer getting her wages, she can rely on a pension of $40 a month.

Since the "disappearance of money", as one Severnyi miner puts it, Vorkuta has had to devise its own crisis economy. Miners earned $350-$1,000 per month before the rouble was devalued in August. They have survived since then only thanks to the many ingenious barter systems set up by the town hall and Vorkuta-Ugol.

The management at Vorkuta-Ugol admits it cannot pay its workers' salaries in full. "To do that, our buyers and the government would have to be solvent," says manager Viacheslav Davidoff. "Only 40 per cent of our output is paid for in cash. The remaining 60 per cent is exchanged for food, oil and operating equipment."

In October, when the miners ended their picket in front of the White House and an agreement was signed between their unions and the government, they received an initial payment of one month's salary as part of their pay arrears, which now total $3.2 million.

Vorkuta has had to come to terms with grinding poverty. After spending six hours at the coal face, Boris collects his fur hat, frayed parka and old plastic shopping bag. He is 47, looks 15 years older, and has been working at the Vorkutsky mine since 1971.

"My job is to maintain the gallery props," he says. "It's very hard work — it mostly has to be done by hand, as the machines can't get in there."

It is -20C as Boris waits for the bus that will take him into town. "We've been broken, crushed," he says. He explains how, although unable to pay its workers' wages, Vorkuta-Ugol provides a basic minimum by granting advances of up to $30 a month. At the mine canteen, meals are "free" in that their cost is deducted from a future — and hypothetical — salary. At the Vorkutsky mine, a meal of cabbage, potatoes and meat balls or fish costs the equivalent of 50 cents.

The canteen has also become a grocery. "I use vouchers to feed my four kids — they enable me to buy bread, milk and sometimes potatoes," says Boris. The mine distributes up to 23 vouchers (worth 50 cents each) per month as an advance on wages.

TECHNICIAN Mikhail Timokhin, aged 44, was on an inspection tour 550m below ground at the Severnyi mine. He has been working there for 22 years and knows every nook and cranny of its 110km of galleries. "In the old days, everything was well lit, and the walls of the main galleries were painted. Now the mining company can't afford the electricity, so people work in the dark."

To get to the coal seams, miners have to walk for half an hour in icy draughts produced by ventilators. "We extract 800 tonnes a day," said one miner, slumped against a hydraulic prop. What about safety? "You must be joking," he said. Two men had been crushed to death the previous week in another pit. At least 35 people have been killed in Vorkuta's mines since the beginning of the year. In January there was an explosion at the Tsentralnaya mine which left 23 dead. The galleries had to be flooded, but some coal seams are still smouldering.

"Our technical equipment is ageing, and we can't invest," says the head of the Severnyi mine. "As the miners aren't getting paid, discipline has slackened and this has affected safety — relations with their foremen are tense," Timokhin admits.

Productivity bonuses, which can amount to 60 per cent of pay, mean that miners tend not to pay enough attention to the state of the galleries. Even though salaries are not being paid, the quantity of coal they extract often determines the amount they get in advances.

Sergei Usayova, aged 32, works at the coal face 900m below ground in the Severnyi mine. "Just as many miners died 10 years ago as today," he says. "The difference then was that people kept quiet about it. They said: 'Yes, general,' 'Yes, party'. All that's changed now. When a boss asks me to do something, I think about it, then I say to him: 'Look, why should I go crawling down there in all that shit? Who'll feed my family if I never come back?'" Usayova is a miner's son and was born in Vorkuta. "I'm fed up with complaining," he says. "I want to work 20 hours a day and earn loads of money so I can get out of here and have children."

Most people want to leave Vorkuta but cannot. "To make this town work properly you'd have to evacuate 50,000 people," says mayor Shpektor. "The far north is not a safe place for retired people, the disabled or families of accident victims."

The government had said it would do something about it. It promised air tickets, housing and even work in other regions. "Mines were closed, but no help came," says Vorkuta-Ugol management. Worse, ex-miners returned to the city so as to benefit from pensions and medical treatment, which are better than in the rest of Russia.

Boris says: "One can't stay here too long, the climate's too harsh. I have to get out, but where can I go? Ten years ago everything was paid for. A Black Sea holiday cost only 100 roubles [$6]. This year I had to borrow money to get away for three weeks."

Usayova is fed up with waiting for things to get better. "What I dream of is getting a little money, bribing someone to find me a job in the south and getting out of here."

It is the kind of dream that brings a wry smile to the lips of other miners. For them, Vorkuta has once again become what it was just after the closing down of the gulag: a city of exile for second-class citizens.

(November 24)

Association of Commonwealth Universities

University	Post	Ref. No
AFRICA AND THE CARIBBEAN		
Africa (Zimbabwe)	Director of Computer Services	W47077
Botswana	SL/L Technology & Educational Studies (Re-advertisement)	W47048
Botswana	SL/L Technology & Educational Studies	W47049
Botswana	SL/L Environmental Science	W47050
Botswana	Project Co-ordinator - Equity in Reproductive Health	W47051
Cape Town (South Africa)	L/AL Professional Communication Unit	W47032
Cape Town (South Africa)	L Palaeoanthropology	W47058
Swaziland	L Curriculum Studies in Accounting & Commerce	W47052
Swaziland	Assistant Librarian	W47053
Swaziland	University Bursar	W47054
Swaziland	Administrative Assistant/Assistant Bursar	W47055
Swaziland	Administrative Assistant/Purchasing Officer	W47056
Swaziland	L Geography	W47057
UWI (Jamaica)	RF Neurosciences	W47059
AUSTRALIA		
Queensland	PDF Mathematics	W47029
Queensland	Chair in Human Movement Studies	W47035
HONG KONG		
HK Baptist Univ.	P/AP Music	W47030
HK Polytechnic Univ.	P/AP/ASP Electronic & Information Engineering	W47042
HK Polytechnic Univ.	P/AP/ASP Accountancy	W47062
HK Polytechnic Univ.	AP/ASP Business Studies	W47063
HK Polytechnic Univ.	ASP Management	W47064
HK Polytechnic Univ.	SL Chinese Language Centre	W47065
HK Polytechnic Univ.	AP/ASP English	W47066
HK Polytechnic Univ.	SL/L General Education Centre	W47067
HK Polytechnic Univ	AP/ASP/L Design	W47068
HK Polytechnic Univ.	P Land Surveying & Geo-Informatics	W47069
HK Polytechnic Univ.	P/AP/ASP/L Computing	W47070
HK Polytechnic Univ.	ASP Electrical Engineering	W47071
HK Polytechnic Univ.	AP/ASP Manufacturing Engineering	W47072
HK Polytechnic Univ	ASP/L Maritime Studies	W47073
HK Polytechnic Univ.	ASP/L Nursing	W47074
HK Polytechnic Univ.	ASP Rehabilitation Sciences	W47075
HK Polytechnic Univ.	ASP Jockey Club Rehabilitation Engineering Centre	W47076
Hong Kong Univ.	Clinical AP/ASP Paediatrics	W47033
Hong Kong Univ.	Senior Post(s) in School of Professional and Continuing Education	W47034
Hong Kong Univ.	ASP Research Methodology & Evaluation	W47036
Hong Kong Univ.	ASP Environmental Management	W47044
Hong Kong Univ.	ASP Recreation and Tourism	W47045
Hong Kong Univ.	ASP Service Sector and Retailing	W47046
Hong Kong Univ.	ASP Geography of Information Economy	W47047
NEW ZEALAND		
Auckland	SL Medicine	W47031
PACIFIC		
PNGUT (Papua New Guinea)	Director, Appropriate Technology Community Development Institute (ATCDI)	W47038
PNGUT (Papua New Guinea)	Workshop Manager	W47039
PNGUT (Papua New Guinea)	Manager, Electronic Services Unit	W47080
REST OF THE WORLD		
Oxford (Balliol College, UK)	Visiting Research Fellowships 1999-2000	W47037

Abbreviations: P - Professor; AP - Associate Professor; ASP - Assistant Professor; SL - Senior Lecturer; L - Lecturer; AL - Assistant Lecturer; PDF - Postdoctoral Fellow; RF - Research Fellow.

For further details of any of the above staff vacancies please contact ACU (Advertising), 36 Gordon Square, London WC1H 0PF, UK (internat. tel. +44 171 387 8572 ext. 206 [UK office hours]; fax +44 171 383 0368; e-mail: appts@acu.ac.uk), quoting reference number of post(s). Details will be sent by airmail/first class post. A sample copy of the publication *Appointments in Commonwealth Universities*, including subscription details, is available from the same source.

Promoting educational co-operation throughout the Commonwealth

ACU

UniS

University of Surrey
School of Engineering in the Environment
Department of Civil Engineering

Research Fellow - Pile Design

Salary up to £18,275 per annum

Applications are invited for a civil engineer to carry out fundamental experimental work aimed at allowing the determination of ground conditions from measurements made during auger piling.

The work is supported by EPSRC, and will be carried out in collaboration with Stent Foundations and Lancaster University, over a period of 18 months. It will involve both laboratory and field work, and represents an excellent opportunity to work on a challenging and innovative project.

Applicants may be graduates, but will preferably already have a PhD, and should have experience with geotechnical laboratory testing and instrumentation.

Applications in the form of a CV and covering letter (2 copies of both) with the names and addresses of two referees should be sent to: The Personnel Department (KD/arb/1596), University of Surrey, Guildford, Surrey GU2 5XH, UK, quoting Reference1596.

The closing date for applications is Friday 8th January 1999.

Visit the University Web Site at http://www.surrey.ac.uk/
The University is committed to an Equal Opportunities Policy

Oxfam Programme In DPRK (North Korea)

Oxfam's programme will continue water disinfection through the distribution of HTH chlorine and extend a pilot project of chlorine production from raw salt enabling selected county towns to produce their own means of water disinfection. Water testing laboratories will be supplied with equipment, chemicals and reagents in order to test and monitor high risk water supplies. An assessment has been carried out by Oxfam of pump capacity and condition, and interventions designed to address these needs are included in the new programme for selected towns. We need the following staff to carry out the programme.

Programme Manager

9 month contract based in Pyongyang.
Salary: £18,455 p.a. (non-taxable)/£22,178 p.a. (UK taxable), plus accommodation
Ref: OS/PM/KOR/HM/GW

Key responsibilities: To represent Oxfam, to manage implementation of the programme, to be responsible for the setting of objectives, work plans and appraisal of staff performance. To produce donor narrative reports and financial reports and report to Oxfam headquarters on programme activities. To ensure that programme funds and materials are correctly managed.

Key competencies: Proven team management experience. Good writing and reporting skills. Experience of managing substantial programme budgets. Capacity for strategic thinking and analysis. Excellent communication skills, tact and diplomacy. Experience of public health programmes an advantage. Understanding and experience of NGO programmes.

Water and Sanitation Engineer

9 month contract based in Pyongyang.
Salary: £16,614 p.a. (non-taxable)/£19,787 p.a. (UK taxable), plus accommodation
Ref: OS/WSE/KOR/HM/GW

Key responsibilities: To undertake regular and detailed water surveillance work in the field, to undertake on the job training in the use of chlorine as a disinfectant, DelAgua and chemical testing kits. To work on the distribution and use of chlorine supplied to ensure its appropriate use and to monitor improvements in water quality as a consequence.

Key competencies: Qualification to degree level or appropriate experience in public health, civil or mechanical engineering. Experience in water surveillance work. Experience of use of chlorine for urban water disinfection. Experience of /or desire to address needs in sanitation and hygiene promotion if required.

Water Quality Chemist/Engineer

9 month contract based in Pyongyang.
Salary: £16,614 p.a. (non-taxable)/£19,787 p.a. (UK taxable), plus accommodation
Ref: OS/WQCE/KOR/HM/GW

Key activities: As water sanitation engineer above and additionally; to work on Oxfam's continuing programme of installation and operation of OSEC units and to advise on other water treatment processes as required. To work on monitoring use of material and equipment supplied to strengthen the laboratory based water quality surveillance work.

Key competencies: Qualification to degree level in chemistry or public health or water quality testing laboratory experience. Experience in OSEC processes and other water treatment chemical processes. Experience in water surveillance work. Experience of use of chlorine for urban water disinfection.

Water/Sanitation Engineer (Mechanical)

9 month contract based in Pyongyang.
Salary: £16,614 p.a. (non-taxable)/£19,787 p.a. (UK taxable), plus accommodation
Ref: OS/WSEM/KOR/HM/GW

Key activities: As water sanitation engineer above and additionally; to work on the need for existing semi-urban or rural water system rehabilitation and maintenance. To specify and order new equipment required for repair and rehabilitation of water systems, to draw up and agree contractual arrangements for the installation of this equipment, to monitor the installation of this equipment.

Key competencies: Qualification to degree level in public health, civil or mechanical engineering. Experience of urban water system design, repair and rehabilitation. Experience of managing urban water system infrastructure works. Experience in water surveillance work. Experience of use of chlorine for urban water disinfection.

Office Manager/Logistician

9 month contract based in Pyongyang and/or Beijing.
Salary: £14,200 p.a. (non-taxable)/£16,653 p.a. (UK taxable), plus accommodation
Ref: OS/OML/KOR/HM/GW

Key activities: Maintaining Oxfam financial systems and other financial records. Producing financial reports for donors and submitting other reports. Undertaking logistics tasks such as purchasing and transport of supplies. Tracking supplies. Run the office.

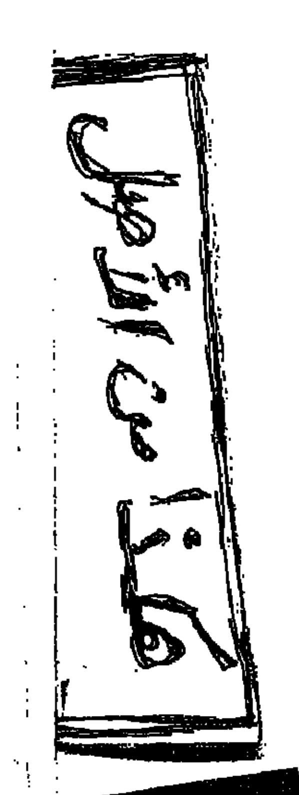
Key competencies: Qualifications and/or extensive experience in administration and logistics related skills. Experience of financial reporting to donors. Proven bookkeeping ability. Advanced spreadsheet skills (Excel an advantage). Experience of establishing office systems and purchasing.

For further details and an application form please send a large SAE to: International Human Resources, Oxfam, 274 Banbury Road, Oxford OX2 7DZ quoting the appropriate reference number. Closing date for applications: 3 January 1999. Interviews to be held: 25-29 January 1999.

Founded in 1942, Oxfam works with people regardless of race or religion in their struggle against poverty. Oxfam GB is a member of Oxfam International. For further information http://www.oxfam.org.uk/



Oxfam GB is striving to be an equal opportunity employer



CIDSE CAMBODIA, LAOS AND VIETNAM PROGRAMME

CIDSE is a non-government organisation working in Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam, supporting agriculture, irrigation, primary health care, credit and other rural development projects, and providing a range of training opportunities to project partners. Field Offices are in Hanoi, Phnom Penh and Vientiane and a project office in Ho Chi Minh City. The programme is coordinated by a lead agency in Belgium. Applications are invited from suitably qualified, highly motivated candidates for the position advertised below, which is based in Phnom Penh.

FIELD REPRESENTATIVE

Major areas of responsibilities include:

- Study overall context of development in Cambodia on an ongoing basis
- With wide participation, complete strategic plan
- Represent the CIDSE Cambodia programme
- Ensure the effective implementation and coordination of projects in Cambodia
- Ensure efficient administration and financial management
- Oversee personnel management
- Oversee and participate in development education, advocacy initiatives
- Facilitate process of selecting a Cambodian Field Representative
- Coach, train and prepare the selected Cambodian to assume the Field Representative position
- Prepare CIDSE Cambodia to function more autonomously

Person Specifications:

1. Minimum of 3 years previous experience as representative for an NGO
2. Proven skills in management of projects
3. Proven skills in administration, finances and personnel management
4. Able to develop capacity of local staff
5. Strong leadership qualities, communication skills and cultural sensitivity
6. Relevant post-graduate qualification

Contract Duration: 2 years, starting June 1999

Provisional interview schedule: February 1999

Applications:

Job descriptions are available on request. Applications close on 22 January 1999. Send your curriculum vitae, a list of referees and a letter addressing each of the specifications listed above to:

Mrs. Leen Van Helleputte, CIDSE CLV Programme
Huidevettersstraat 165, 1000 Brussels, Belgium
Fax (322) 502-5127, Phone (322) 502-5858, E-mail CLVPROG@EUNET.BE

INTEGRATED COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT ADVISOR

Major areas of responsibility include:

- Assist the Cambodian ICD Department in strengthening its programmes in four provinces
- Facilitate discussions and preparation of strategic and annual plans
- Assist staff in preparing and managing programme evaluations, following up on findings and recommendations
- Assist staff in preparation of reports on ICD programmes for donor agencies
- Strengthen programme monitoring systems
- Facilitate ongoing discussion regarding programme implementation and strategic issues, and assist in strengthening coordination among programmes
- Train/coach staff on integrated community development and project management topics, and any relevant sectors
- Facilitate links between CIDSE and the development community in Cambodia and the region

Person Specifications:

1. Minimum of 3 years previous experience in community development project management, with strong emphasis on integrated development
2. Post-graduate degree in field related to community development or specific sector
3. Proven skills in project planning, design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation
4. Proven skills in one or more specific sectors preferred, including credit, agriculture, health, water/sanitation or education
5. Able to develop capacity of local staff
6. Strong communication skills, cultural sensitivity

Contract Duration: 2 years, starting February 1999

Applications:

Job descriptions are available on request. Applications close on 31 December 1998. Send your curriculum vitae, a list of referees and a letter addressing each of the specifications listed above to:

Brian Heidel, CIDSE Cambodia
P.O.Box 5, Phnom Penh, Cambodia
Fax (855) 1881-0761, E-mail cidsecam@bigpond.com.kh

ANGLIA BUSINESS SCHOOL

MBA - MASTER IN BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION
Cambridge, England
Starts 1st February 1999

This one year full time MBA Programme is intensive, interdisciplinary and international in focus. It is designed for graduates with some industry experience and for those who aspire to senior management positions (also available September 1999).

Other programmes offered in (September 1999) are: are Part-time, Executive MBA; Full time, MA International Business, MA International Business Economics, MA Arts Administration

For further details please contact: Linda Lawrence, Anglia Business School, Division of Management Development, East Road, Cambridge, England CB1 1PT.
Tel: +(44) 1223 363271 ext 2228 Fax: +(44) 1223 352900
email: l.lawrence@mercury.anglia.ac.uk
Website: http://www.anglia.ac.uk/bmdl/abs/md/MBAFT.HTM

ANGLIA POLYTECHNIC UNIVERSITY

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization is currently filling the position of

DIRECTOR, UNESCO INSTITUTE FOR EDUCATION (UIE) HAMBURG, GERMANY

Main Responsibilities

- The UNESCO Institute for Education is responsible, within UNESCO, for policy development, research, and training, and international co-operation in the field of adult learning, and the follow-up to the Fifth International Conference on Adult Education.
- The incumbent will provide leadership to the Institute's programme, ensure its implementation and secure additional financial resources through fund-raising.

Requirements

- Ph.D. or equivalent in any area related to adult learning.
- Knowledge of emerging adult learning in different national and regional contexts.
- At least 10 years experience in relevant research and development activities, with proven experience and recognition at an international level.
- Leadership qualities, excellent organizational skills.
- Experience in mobilization of financial resources.
- Excellent knowledge of English, working knowledge of French, knowledge of German would be an asset.

Salary and benefits

The post carries grade D-2 common to the UN system which includes a salary, plus a post adjustment, in the range of $113,000 (with dependants) $104,000 (without dependants) exempt from all direct taxation and an international benefits package.

Candidates should send a detailed curriculum vitae in English or French, stating their date of birth, nationality, and gender and attaching an identity photograph to, UNESCO, Chief Recruitment Section, Bureau of Personnel, 7 place de Fontenoy, 75352 Paris 07-SP, France, **no later than 20 December 1998.**



Accountant

Emergencies Department

2 year contract

Salary: £19,787 UK taxable, plus accommodation and expenses whilst on assignment

Oxfam's Emergencies Department has a number of Emergencies Support Personnel (ESP) with skills in various fields who are deployable for assignments of up to three months (sometimes extendable) on emergency programmes. We are recruiting for an ESP Accountant to provide administrative and financial support to emergency programmes. The postholder need not be based in Oxford or the UK, and can be based anywhere in the world with good international access and communications.

Key competencies:

- Several years' accounting experience with related overseas experience
- Computer literacy
- Experience of supervising/managing staff
- Teamwork, tact, flexibility and good interpersonal skills
- Ability to take on a variety of administrative tasks if necessary, including recruitment and training of local staff, establishing and/or maintaining communication systems, office routines and information flow
- Willingness to live and work at times in remote and stressful conditions
- Sympathy with the aims and objectives of Oxfam.

Language proficiency, especially in French, Portuguese, Spanish, Swahili or Arabic would be desirable.

For further details and an application form, please send a large SAE to:

International Human Resources, Oxfam, 274 Banbury Road, Oxford OX2 7DZ, quoting ref: OS/ESP/ACC/HM/GW
Closing date: 8 January 1999.
Interview dates: week commencing 18 January 1999.

Founded in 1942, Oxfam works with people regardless of race or religion in their struggle against poverty. Oxfam GB is a member of Oxfam International.
For further information http://www.oxfam.org.uk/



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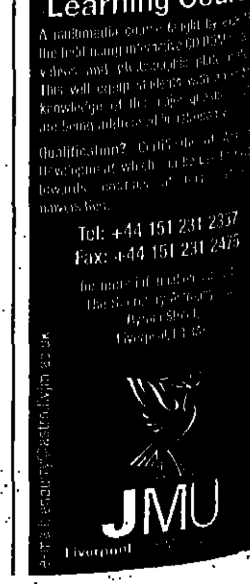
WEBSITE EDITOR
based in Brussels, Belgium

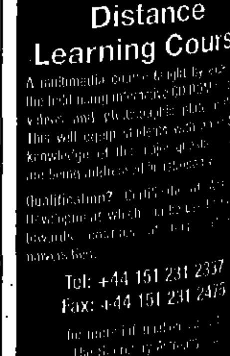
The international medical relief organisation Medicins Sans Frontieres (MSF) is recruiting an experienced editor for its international website. This is a new and exciting senior position accountable to the Director of Communication.

You will have proven skills in website building, editing and writing. You will be able to translate complex and varied information into accessible and user-friendly copy for non-specialist audiences, preferably gained as a journalist.

You will have strong communication skills and an ability to work independently as well as in teams across cultural boundaries, to tight deadlines. The successful candiate will have English as a mother tongue with a strong working knowledge of French and will be able to work long hours and to travel, often at short notice. Monthly salary approx. 87,000 B.F. gross plus benefits.

Please send your cover letter, CV and examples of published work to MSF website recruitment, MSF UK 124-132 Clerkenwell Rd, London EC1R 5DL; Tel: 0171 713 5600; Fax: 0171 7135004; E-mail: office@london.msf.org. Deadline for applications Dec 24th.





Health Unlimited

Community Health Trainer-three posts in Cambodia and Laos

These posts will manage and develop the community health component of PHC projects in which they are based.
Responsibilities: to develop the community health approach, both with communities and with the provincial health department and organise training for the communities and counterparts.
Requirements: two years' experience in community health, preferably including training of community health workers and TBAs. Experience of participatory techniques.
Salary range: £10,000-£12,000

Public Health Coordinator-Cambodia

As part of a PHC project based in Preah Vihear, this post will advise and support the Provincial Health Department in developing the health care system and will provide training in planning and management. Requirements: a qualification in public health, two years' relevant work experience and 6 months' experience in a PHC project in a less developed country. There is scope for a project management role in this post. Salary range: £10,000-£13,000

Health Trainer- Laos

Based in a PHC project in remote Attapeu province.
Responsibilities: establish a training/resource centre. Provide in-service training, help implement training needs assessment and design of training courses. The requirements of this post can be met by either a health professional with experience and aptitude for training, or a trainer with experience of primary health care. Experience of assessing training needs and designing courses is desirable. Salary range: £10,000-£12,000

Contracts are for 18 to 24 months and offer salary plus accommodation and living allowance.

For details (please state which job) and application form contact Madeleine Hammond, Health Unlimited, Prince Consort House, 27-29 Albert Embankment, London SE1 7TS Fax: 0171 582 5900 email ne161@dial.pipex.com Closing date for returned applications 29 January 1999.

SWEDISH COMMITTEE FOR AFGHANISTAN

The Swedish Committe for Afghanistan (SCA) is a well reputed NGO which has worked with assistance programmes in health, education and rural development in Afghanistan since the beginning of the 1980's. The budget for 1998 is approximately £6 million. Main donors are Sida, EU and UN-agencies.

Regional Manager

SCA is looking for a Regional Manager (RM) to be responsible for one of our three programme regions in Afghanistan. The RM will be stationed in Afghanistan and will be reporting to the Country Director at the Central Office in Peshawar, Pakistan. He/she will lead a work force of more than a hundred people, and will be in close contact with other NGOs as well as UN agencies and local authorities. The RM must be prepared to work and travel under sometimes primitive and arduous conditions.

The successful candidate should have a university degree or equivalent and have several years experience of project management in developing countries, with a proven team leader capacity. Experience of work in muslim countries and/or work in complex emergency situations is desirable.

SCA offers an internationally competetive salary and an attractive benefits package. Closing date is January 15, 1999.

Further information can be obtained from:
Håkan Josefsson e-mail: aid/@afghanistankommitten.a.se
tel. +46 8 660 85 50, fax: +46 8 660 85 48

Please send application with CV to:
Swedish Committee for Afghanistan
Sturegatan 16, S-114 36 Stockholm

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1 Stockwell Green, London, England. SW9 9HP
Fax: +44 171-346-5955 e-mail: wse@cabroad.org.uk
An activity of Christians Abroad Charity No 265867

DFID has agreed with the Government of Tanzania to fund an Urban Districts Partnership Project (UDPP) which will provide budgetary support and technical assistance to 3 municipal councils in Tanzania. This will enable them to take advantage of the new opportunities presented by Local Government reform to develop and deliver responsible quality basic services, particularly to the poorest members of their communities.



TANZANIA

PROJECT CO-ORDINATOR

Key Outputs of the UDPP include:-

- the establishment of effective links between the project, Local Government Reform (LGR) and sector reforms;
- improved sustainable resource management and allocation in the 3 councils;
- enhanced capacity of the councils and other service providers to plan and manage demand-led services which benefit poor and vulnerable groups;
- strengthened capacity of community organisation and lower tiers of local government to manage and sustain demand-led services.

The UDPP is designed as a process project which, subject to the satisfactory outcome of a joint Government of Tanzania/DFID review at the end of the 15 month inception phase, is planned to run for a period of just over 5 years.

As Project Co-ordinator, you will have overall responsibility for the day-to-day management and implementation of the inception phase of the project in all 3 councils and for the establishment and maintenance of effective links with the Local Government Reform Team (LGRT) in Dar es Salaam. Based in Dar es Salaam, but travelling extensively to Mtwara, Mbeya and Singida, you will have specific management and operational responsibilities to ensure that the milestones of the inception phase are achieved.

Specifically you will be involved in establishing strong and effective links with the LGRT in the Ministry of Regional Administration and Local Government and undertaking a design workshop to clarify the outputs, activities and indicators of the inception phase in collaboration with LGRT and the project councils.

QUALIFICATIONS

The position demands a first degree, preferably in Social Science, Economics or Public Administration A Master's qualification in these fields is desirable but not essential. Work experience in Africa is essential, whilst work experience in East Africa and Tanzania is desirable. Excellent interpersonal and communications skills are pre-requisite as is the ability to rapidly analyse and assess social, financial and institutional situations as well as lead and work as a team member

Strategic vision and the capacity to translate this vision into results-oriented action is important. You should have a sound understanding of local government issues in Africa, preferably in Tanzania, and of the implications of, and opportunities presented by, Local Government reform. The necessary operational skills to assist selected local authorities in Tanzania to take advantage of these opportunities is pre-requisite Ideally, you will have experience of working in both public administration and the private sector, experience of personnel management and a working knowledge of public sector financial and revenue systems. Some experience in the planning, management and delivery of quality public services and understanding the potential uses of participatory techniques for project planning and evaluation would be an advantage Applicants should either be nationals of Member States of the European Economic Area (EEA), or Commonwealth citizens who have an established right of abode and the right to work in the United Kingdom.

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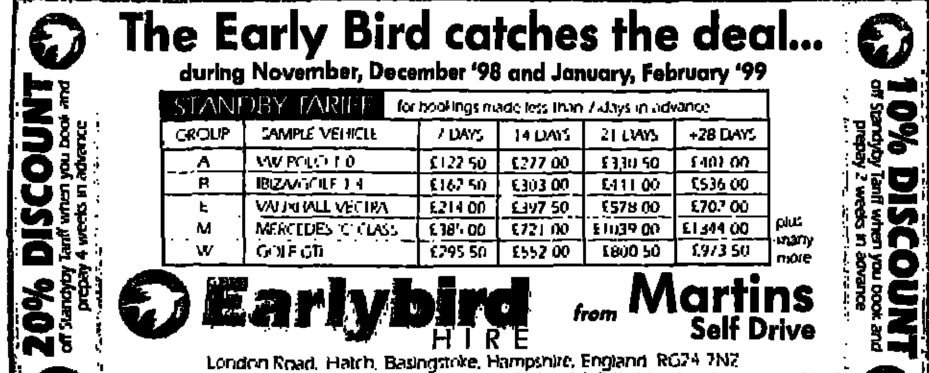
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HOTELS & APARTMENTS



Hope lies in sight for ageing eyes

Sarah Boseley

THE success of an operation to restore the sight of a nearly blind man may hold out hope for thousands whose vision is failing with the onset of old age.

John Barr, a 70-year-old retired dentist, is one of the first guinea pigs for an experimental operation to counter the effects of macular degeneration — where the central part of the retina wears out. Between 500,000 and 2 million people in Britain have only peripheral vision as a result. They are unable to read, and many are registered partially blind.

Mr Barr is among the 10 per cent who have a particular form of the disease which may be operable. The treatment is still experimental, but his surgeon, David Wong of the Liverpool Royal Hospital, described it as the "single most important surgical development for many years".

Mr Wong, one of the few opthalmic specialists in the world to have attempted the technique, said he had effectively made a healthy part of the eye take over the function of a damaged part. "This is the sort of thing every surgeon dreams of because it may transform the lives of so many people," he said.

Mr Barr is the seventh patient on whom Mr Wong has performed the operation. In three cases the treatment is thought to have failed, and in a further three it is too early to tell.

But since undergoing surgery Mr Barr's vision has significantly improved. "In the right eye I lost most of the vision about six years ago," he said. "Then the left eye started to go the same way. The day after the operation I could see with that eye and my vision has got better and better. I can now read again, see who I'm looking at and do all sorts of fiddly jobs."

Mr Wong operated on the left eye, detaching the retina and making a fold in it so that when it was replaced, an undamaged part was in the centre of the retina, becoming the macula, which relays messages about colours and detail to the brain.

His sight is not perfect, he concedes. Things he sees with his left eye seem near, and far away with the right eye. "I have to keep closing one eye to see where things really are," said Mr Barr.

Antonia Chitty, the eye health policy officer for the Royal National Institute for the Blind, said: "This treatment is not relevant for the vast majority of people."

But others should not despair. "People with macular degeneration never lose all their sight. They can be helped to carry on living an independent life," she said.

The eye has it . . . David Wong (left) and John Barr PHOTO: DAVE KENDALL

Notes & Queries Joseph Harker

IS THERE any English word that rhymes with "orange"?

PERHAPS it will make you cringe
Or even cause you to binge
To find that the word infringe
Actually rhymes with orange,
Plus several more that hinge
On sounds of a similar tinge.
— *Rollo Bruce, Horsforth, Leeds*

THE 1985 Penguin Rhyming Dictionary considers the final syllable only and thus claims to rhyme "orange" with the likes of "syringe", "scavenge" and "lozenge". These, though, are weak rhymes. Walker's Rhyming Dictionary offered "sporange", meaning a spore-case, which is indeed in the Oxford English Dictionary. I'd like to see it used in a casual couplet, though . . . — *Ian Shuttleworth, London*

WHAT is the origin of the phrase "over a barrel"?

TO BE "whipped over a barrel" is to suffer one of the many methods of punishment invented by sailors, who have few rivals in this field. A mere whipping is painful enough, but seafarers discovered that the ordeal could be greatly increased by first wrapping the victim face-first around a large barrel, and binding his hands tightly to his feet. Thus stretched, the flesh of the back is not only less able to disperse the force of a whiplash, but also more likely to tear and gape when the skin is finally broken. . .

To complete the punishment, the miscreant would have stinging seawater splashed on his open wounds, and then be left on deck as a deterrent to others. — *Mathew Hendry, Cupar, Fife*

IF I WERE given a loaded gun and diplomatic immunity, would it be all right to go and shoot General Pinochet?

I WOULD suggest no, because of the direct consequences for yourself. Killing is an action that leaves a potential within your mind for very unpleasant, painful effects in the future. However, if it were of benefit to others to kill Pinochet it may be worth accepting these unpleasant consequences for the greater good. Those who wish for retribution can contemplate how Pinochet, in his next life, is going to experience a painful and terrifying world as a result of his evil actions, and perhaps be able to develop compassion for him. — *Gen Kelsang Delek, Tilopa Buddhist Centre, Vancouver, Canada*

DO MAGNETS work in space? If so, where do they point to?

YES, magnets do work in space. Ferromagnetic material (which magnets used in compasses are made of) responds to the presence of a magnetic field, however and wherever that field is produced.

A magnetic field has a sense of direction, and magnets tend to line up with that direction. In the case of a terrestrial compass this will generally be the direction of the Earth's magnetic field, but this can change if you place another magnet nearby.

Large astronomical bodies (such as the Earth and the Sun) tend to produce magnetic fields that pervade the space around them. A magnet in space would feel the Earth's magnetic field if it were near the Earth and would tend to point towards the magnetic North pole, just as it would on the Earth's surface.

Near the Sun the Earth has a negligible effect but the Sun's own magnetic field is stronger, so the magnet would point towards the Sun's "North pole". Farther afield, away from any stars, the Milky Way itself contains a magnetic field caused by the dynamo effect of galactic rotation. The magnet would therefore tend to line up in whatever direction this rather complicated galactic field was pointing. — *Dr Peter Coles, Astronomy Unit, Queen Mary & Westfield College, London*

Any answers?

TO WHAT does the "pied" refer in the Pied Piper of Hamelin? — *Roger O'Keefe, Cambridge*

WHEN was the word "quack" first used to describe a bogus doctor, and why? — *Rose Gamble, Stroud, Gloucestershire*

WHEN was the first passport issued, and by whom? — *Avril Eades, Rome, Italy*

Answers should be e-mailed to weekly@guardian.co.uk, faxed to 0171/+44171-242-0985, or posted to The Guardian Weekly, 75 Farringdon Road, London EC1M 3HQ. The Notes & Queries website is at http://nq.guardian.co.uk/

Letter from the Dordogne Michael Mills

Marriage à la mode

HAVING recently been to England, where my companion of 22 years and I got married with our grown-up children as witnesses, it was with trepidation that we tip-toed back home to our village in the Dordogne. Would the villagers be put out that, having lived here for 16 years and Madame even being a member of the *Conseil Municipal*, the village council, we had taken French leave (or *filé à l'anglaise* as French puts it) and gone abroad to do the deed?

The three-day drive back home to the Dordogne with a stop *chez* Madame's father in Paris, my new but somehow familiar father-in-law, was, I suppose, our honeymoon. Not that I'd have missed it for the world. But there was one bit for which the blushing bride and I had been, so to speak, girding our loins: the tradition, in this part of the world, of waking up newly-weds in the middle of the night with a tureen of *tourain*, or garlic soup.

Elsewhere they might clamour for bloodstained sheets on the balcony the next morning. Here, they bang you up in the small hours. And just in case the newlyweds need persuasion in addition to their own no doubt freshly discovered bodily charms, the *tourain* ought to do the trick. It is of the particularly spiced variety, designed to heat the young lovers' blood and presumably their ardour.

We knew something was up when, a couple of days after our return, our farming neighbour Michel rang to ask if we were going out that evening. No, I heard my bride say. *Parfait*, he said. And if your new husband suggests going out, say you've got a headache, *d'accord?* So we sat down to supper that evening wondering whether to get an early night, expecting to be woken in the middle of it, or just wait until he and a couple of friends turned up.

We were still wondering at 9.30, when some curious scuffling outside the door was followed by a knock. Being a kind-hearted lot, our neighbours had decided not to wait until the middle of the night. There they all were: not just a few neighbours, but the whole *Conseil Municipal* as well, nearly 30 people all told, or about a third of the village.

In they all waltzed, grinning hugely, three or four staggering under the weight of the stone fountain that was the village's wedding present to us. They also bore a large container of thoroughly drinkable Bergerac, most of which disappeared in the next two hours, and the ingredients for making *tourain*. As we scuttled about fetching chairs and pouring wine, Michel's wife Martine chopped onions and garlic and cut bread.

The masterstroke came from Guitou, our lovely neighbour up the hill, who has watched over us with motherly care since we first came to live here with our babies nearly 17 years ago. (Our youngest, only four months old, spent her days in a Moses basket by Guitou's huge fireplace, watched over by *grandmère* Marcelline, who would croak a warning shout whenever the baby demanded food.)

GUITOU had brought her own tureen, in it a special *tourain* to be drunk by only the blushing bride and her ardent groom. So while Martine dished up her *tourain du peuple* to the others, we drank our own special brew, enriched with what its author said were *ingrédients secrets*.

As the others drank and then half-filled their bowls for a handsome *chabrol* (which means pouring a spoonful or two of wine into your empty bowl, swishing it about so that it warms slightly and collects any loitering soup, then picking up the bowl and gulping it all down), they of course filled mine to within a hair's breadth of the brim, and then half again. All eyes were expectantly upon us.

Whatever secret ingredients went into Guitou's *tourain des jeunes mariés*, they gave us both an immediate heady whirl and a twinkle to the eye. If successful fertility rites were the name of the game, they should perhaps have left then. But they didn't, and it turned into a very jolly party.

We finally climbed happily into bed two hours later. No sooner had our curly locks touched the pillow, though, than it was nearly nine hours later and bright morning. We had slept like angels.

A Country Diary

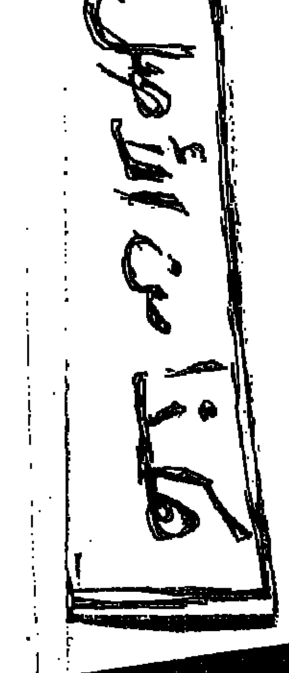
Ray Collier

RIVER FINDHORN: There was that indescribable feeling that something was watching me. Sometimes such feelings are pleasant, such as the time when a sika deer stag was watching me from dense cover: but this time there was almost a sense of foreboding.

There were mountain hares in view, but they were some way off, and they sat at the entrance to their holes being conspicuous in their white winter coats. Perhaps the foreboding was from the strath, as the area I was standing in had steep sides with the river racing between, and hills brooding over the scene.

Then there was a snort and I turned to see the cause of my feelings — a large billy goat was peering over a ridge at me a few metres away. Perhaps I had surprised him (as indeed he certainly had me) and we stood looking at each other for a few minutes. He seemed alone, which is not unusual as he appeared old; binoculars enabled me to count the growth rings on the huge black horns, indicating he was eight or nine years old.

What I could see of him, head, neck and shoulders, was completely black, and the horns were some of the most impressive I had seen in the tribes of wild goats that haunt the banks of the River Findhorn. Then the billy was off, and for some distance I watched him, as always admiring the casual-looking walk that covers the ground so deceptively quickly. I wandered on down the strath thinking of the very apt words from Charles St John in the middle of the 19th century: "I do not know a river that more completely realises all one's idea of beauty in the Highland scenery than the Findhorn."



Shimmeringly minimal

POP
Caroline Sullivan

"*SOD OFF,*" said the T-shirt, which is no way for a lady to talk. For £15, though, a tight black Sod Off T-shirt with Bjork's name on the back could be yours. But why Sod Off? Like many things about Iceland's biggest musical export, there's no real explanation.

Bjork's circumstances give her no obvious reason to sulk: 1998 has seen her win a Brit Award and complete a successful world tour of the album Homogenic. So can we take Sod Off to be a perverse Nordic greeting? Or an example of her playful relationship with the English language (which reached surreal heights when she accepted her Brit with the words "I am grateful grapefruit")? Or maybe she really does mean sod off — to the legions whose comprehension of her extends no further than the adjectives elfin and pixie-like. "They always say elfin," she was complaining as far back as the release of her groundbreaking solo debut, Debut, in 1993.

Her looks are both blessing and curse — blessing because they drew attention to her voice, which remains one of the most distinctive in music; curse because her sprite-face has got her pigeonholed as pop's mad Arctic cutestress. It has also attracted some unhealthily dedicated fans, like the Florida man who committed suicide on videotape, and the Spaniard who broke into her mother's house and lived there for several days.

Some people, mistakenly, don't take her seriously, and her appearance at Birmingham Symphony Hall would have provided ammunition for that viewpoint. Her forehead was painted white with a stripe down the nose, and she was barefoot, which explained the roadie hoovering the stage before the show. There was no obvious reason for this, but such was her magnetism that you simply accepted it, as you also accepted that she was accompanied not by a band but by a programmer and the Icelandic String Octet.

As ever, the show was a mixture of the organic and the synthetic, the contradiction expressed in the very stage decor. The backdrop was the wafting sort she favours, a piece of transparent material with red-and-black strips hanging down like cobwebs in a haunted house. The effect was that of air and water, a reminder that she gets much of her inspiration from the natural world.

But the other side of the equation was that much of the stage was taken up by keyboardist Mark Bell's electronic doodads. The organic/artificial divide was emphasised by the clash of Bell's pulses and beats and the Octet's soaring strings. The result, though, was minimal, spare and perfectly interlocking, rather like Bjork herself.

That shimmering minimalism is what makes her so compelling. While there were times when she seemed not to know what to do with herself — and so did an unrhythmic pixie-shuffle to pass the time — she had cool, angular Presence with a capital P. Presence enabled her to change the already unique pronunciation on Venus As A Boy ("His weekid sanse of humooor") and emit wordless yelps for five minutes without alienating the audience. Presence allowed her to sing of private things ("How can you offer me love like that? I'm exhausted, leave me alone") and draw you into her world while never really giving much away.

Presence meant that the soft, melting Isobel was just as forceful as the sparse, percussive Hunter, and that when she said "I thought maybe people would stand up", they stood as one. Mostly, though, Presence meant that she could tell her people to sod off and know they'd be back for more.



Touched by her presence: the compelling Bjork PHOTO: CHRIS RADBURN

Room for swingin' cats

POP CD
Adam Sweeting

Frank Sinatra
The Capitol Years (Capitol) £150

WHILE John Lennon and Bruce Springsteen are making their bids for your Yuletide dollar with paltry four-CD sets, Frank Sinatra arrives with an enormous crash with this vast 21-disc box to remind everyone who's still Boss. By and large, experts agree that Sinatra's body of work for Capitol, recorded between 1953 and 1962, represents the summit of his artistic career, and it's assembled here in its entirety. After the chaos and bad feeling surrounding the legendary crooner's will and legacy, this is the most emphatic possible reminder of what all the fuss was about.

Later, Sinatra would go on to make excellent recordings for his own label, Reprise, but the Capitol years caught him in his prime while also teaming him up with musical directors Billy May, and, especially, Nelson Riddle. Billy May was the singer's original choice of collaborator, but when touring engagements meant May was unavailable, Sinatra made a beeline for Riddle and set about recording his Capitol debut, Songs For Young Lovers. It's not unreasonable to say that the album promptly altered the course of the popular music of the day, an amazing feat for a singer who had been written off by critics during the career slump that knocked the stuffing out of him in the late 1940s.

The high proportion of classic songs (A Foggy Day, My Funny Valentine, Someone To Watch Over Me et al) was evidence of the impeccable taste in material which was a hallmark of Sinatra at his peak. Perhaps most of all, Riddle's discreet but swinging arrangements brought out the feel for jazz which Sinatra had developed during his stint with Tommy Dorsey's band during the forties.

With Riddle, Sinatra proceeded to punch out a stream of matchless albums. The ineffably poignant In The Wee Small Hours was followed by the zinging and zestful Songs For Swingin' Lovers. A Swingin' Affair! picked up where the latter left off, while Riddle excelled himself by concocting the broody arrangements for Only The Lonely in a week.

Of the recordings Sinatra made without Riddle, the most celebrated was Come Fly With Me. Powered along by Billy May's bouncing, muscular arrangements, the disc perhaps more than any other summed up the remarkable artistic renaissance Sinatra had enjoyed since he joined Capitol. It captured a sense of brash all-American optimism in its songs, an impression compounded by the sleeve artwork of gleaming airliners ready to whisk passengers off to romantic and exotic destinations.

There isn't a lot to criticise, except perhaps the flimsy and badly punctuated booklet, a miserable effort compared to the lavish productions which accompanied the previous Capitol Years collection or 1996's Complete Capitol Singles Collection. But this is music which will never let you down.

Mantras in the blood

CLASSICAL
Tim Ashley

***THE* Estonian Philharmonic Chamber Choir, founded in 1981 by the conductor Tõnu Kaljuste, have assumed something like cult status, largely through their association with the music of Arvo Pärt, whose works they have extensively performed and recorded.**

Pärt's Litany formed the centre-piece of their programme for a whistle-stop tour of the UK — three venues on three consecutive nights — and when the final chords faded away in the packed Queen Elizabeth Hall on London's South Bank, they were greeted with rapturous applause which turned into a standing ovation when Pärt himself, looking shy and modest as always, appeared on the platform. Both the choir and Kaljuste's other ensemble, the Tallinn Chamber Orchestra, seemed slightly surprised, as if they hadn't expected such a reception.

Pärt's appeal is understandable, a combination of approachability and spiritual certainty. The Litany is the music of devotional ritual. Setting St John Chrysostom's mantra-like prayers for the 24 hours of the day, it contemplates timelessness and eternity. Four soloists — in this case the Hilliard Ensemble on excellent form — act as celebrants, their chanting, free-flowing lines subtly shifting with each repetition, gradually subsuming both chorus and orchestra into the texture, as the music builds to an imposing climax. The effect is hypnotic. If it's not done well, it can also be soporific. The Estonians have this music in their blood, however, and the piece was riveting from start to finish.

They also brought with them works by Pärt's younger compatriot Erkki-Sven Tüür. His music is similarly rooted in spirituality, though he's rather different from Pärt, favouring big architectural structures rather than creating density by means of repetitions.

This music is less timeless, less ritualistic, and you're occasionally strongly aware of his influences. His Passion For Strings begins with slow double bass phrases, which gradually unwind after the fashion of Gorecki's famous Third Symphony, then pass through the orchestra, finally fading out in an unearthly fluttering high in the violins.

Tüür's Requiem sets the entire Latin text in a single unbroken span, beginning with low bass chanting, broadening to take in the full forces, then sinking back into the depths.

It's a comparatively serene piece: the Dies Irae, despite melodic references to Berlioz's cataclysmic setting, holds no terrors; polytonal clashes and unresolved harmonies created moments of sustained intensity. I felt that Tüür hasn't fully found his voice yet — but when he does, the results will be fascinating.

Trumpet major

JAZZ CDs
Ronald Atkins

Miles Davis
The Complete Bitches Brew Sessions (Columbia AC4K 65570) (4CDs) £49.99

John Coltrane
Complete Impulse Studio Recordings (IMPD8-280) (8CDs) £49.99

WHEN Columbia released from their vaults years ago two albums of unissued Miles Davis material, we thought that was it. Now they present us with the six tracks that made up Bitches Brew (1969), some others from the same sessions put out elsewhere, and no fewer than nine completely new tracks, of which only a couple are rejects of tunes issued at the time.

There were precursors, notably Davis's In A Silent Way, but Bitches Brew was the album to confirm the demise, temporarily at least, of anything to do with bebop, and to replace it with jazz-rock, fusion or whatever as the dominant strain. Part of an intense bout of studio recording, it included many of the great musicians associated in one form or another with Davis during the sixties.

Wayne Shorter, Herbie Hancock, Chick Corea, Joe Zawinul and John McLaughlin would each take elements from here and expand them within their own groups, influencing in turn the routes taken by jazz throughout the world. The context was startlingly fresh, but erupting from the dense, ever-changing patterns were declamatory trumpet passages — wide-ranging, broad-toned, supremely majestic and packed with drama — that harked as far back as his Milestones days.

In a sense, Bitches Brew is transitional. Shortly afterwards, Davis discovered the wah-wah pedal, and blending the textures became his absolute priority. From that point onwards, there are few tracks one could recommend simply for trumpet solos.

John Fordham adds: The market catering for completists offers more ironies than most in the case of John Coltrane. Not only did he die at 40, and with the long preliminaries of his mission barely passed, but the art he was devoted to was one in which the notion of completion was a contradiction. What is containable by dates and events, however, is the life of what is now called Coltrane's "classic quartet" — the group comprising himself, McCoy Tyner, Jimmy Garrison and Elvin Jones that still inspires the sounds of countless bands around the world.

This eight-disc set, bound like a book and constrained in a metal sleeve bearing Trane's sepia image, covers the period of studio recordings for the Impulse label from December 1961 to September 1965 — when Coltrane began to draw his pianist wife Alice and younger players from the emerging avant-garde into the group, triggering its eventual fragmentation.

But it isn't a nostalgic exercise, because this music's currency is still so vivid, and the urgency of its execution dazzling. Both long-standing and recent admirers will love it.

If you would like to order any of the box sets on this page contact CultureShop (see page 28). P&p is *not* included in quoted prices

The art of armchair gardening

TELEVISION
Nancy Banks-Smith

LONDON Pride is nothing to do with London. It is a saxifrage, named after a Mr London, who bred it. Not many people want to know that.

I always felt the name suited the rowdy fireweed better, which blazed up like a magenta bonfire in London wherever a bomb had dropped. It was the poppy of the second world war.

London Pride was the theme tune of **Personal Services** (Channel 4), about city gardeners. The series is one of those gemlike things, which needs a good researcher to find the characters (who, of course, don't realise they are characters), a deft director and a soothing reporter. Often, as here, John Pitman, who also produced. Gardening is one thing the old do better. Gardening is the only thing the old do better.

Dennis (70) and David (73) have a mildly abrasive relationship, which creates a glow without bursting into flames. David, a retired headhunter, owns the garden. Dennis, who lives in a flat above him, does the gardening. I am not perfectly clear what a headhunter does but it became clearer as David talked. "I don't really *do* anything. I'm not interested in doing anything. I pick other people to do things."

(I could do that job. Why can't I have that job?)

"So long as the people I decentralise to are satisfied with the relationship. I'm quite prepared to sit back here and read my newspaper."

(Look, I'd really like that job.)

Outside the barred window (very rough, Chelsea and Kensington, people steal your peaches) Dennis could be seen bent into an industrious hoop. David doesn't actually pay him. *(This man is a genius.)* He gives him a bottle of wine a week. Dennis put the wine in a jam-packed rack. "As you can see, we're not great boozers."

Channel 4's publicity for Capital Gardens, probably transcribed phonetically, promised us Lady Evelyn Barbara-Rolley, widow of conductor Sir John Barbara-Rolley. I remember her well. She used to play the oboe in the Halley.

Lady Barbirolli (87) is charming and beautifully at ease on camera. I've remembered one other thing the old do better. Television. Cameras don't frighten them. They've been frightened by experts.

I always meant to tell you about the flowers the Queen Mother got when she laid the stone for the National Theatre. It was, I suspect, Lord Olivier's bright idea, being composed of plants mentioned by Shakespeare. "Rose, daffodil, rue, woodbine, willow [it gets better] leek, dock leaf, dogweed, bogwort, disordered twig, darnel, hemlock, rank fumitory, rough thistle, kecksie, bur, crowflowers, nettles, long purples." Long purples, as Shakespeare pointed out, are ***plain rude.***

When I had flu in California I was given a vitamin B injection — at least I hope it was — in my bottom. Well, you don't like to argue. Julie Walters has the same effect on **Dinnerladies** (BBC1). Instant invigoration and aching embarrassment.

She plays Petula, allegedly Bren's mother, though Bren (Victoria Wood) doesn't seem too sure. Petula's past is rackety and her present unsavoury. Last week she turned up with a toyboy. This week with a policewoman. "It's not how it seems, sweetheart," she said, extending a hand to Bren. The other, it became clear, was handcuffed to the policewoman, whom she addressed fondly as Kirsty. Julie gazed admiringly at this pillar of rectitude. "Gorgeous, isn't she? Like a white Nina Simone."

I was reminded of Hylda Baker, a twisted little corkscrew of a comedienne, gazing admiringly at her huge and speechless stooge. "She knows you know!"

Dame Thora Hird arrived like Boadicea with scythes on her wheelchair. When Celia Imrie said she came from Surrey, Dame Thora just *muttered.* I laugh whenever I hear that and I wish I knew how she did it. As Ralph Richardson said conspiratorially to Donald Sinden, when he heard he was writing about acting, *"Don't tell them how it's done!"*

I don't think any of them know how it's done.

The Turner dung good

THANKS* to a large helping of elephant dung, conceptual art's hold on the Turner Prize was broken last week when Chris Ofili became the first painter to win the £20,000 prize since 1985, *writes Dan Glaister.

But he is not the sort of painter who would necessarily appease the traditionalists who have made a habit of protesting against the Turner Prize's recent championing of conceptual art. His colourful works include dried, resin-coated elephant dung, glitter and cartoon characters as well as incorporating references to black culture and Renaissance painting.

Ofili was the only man and the only painter among the four shortlisted artists. The last painter to win the prize was Howard Hodgkin in 1985. Ofili is the first black artist to win.

The judges praised "the originality and energy of his painting, and his dynamic use of colour". They also admired "the complexity of his work, with its multilayered references to contemporary urban culture and awareness of the history of art".

Ofili's win caps an astounding year for the young painter, following an acclaimed show in Southampton that later toured to the Serpentine Gallery in London. It is currently at the Whitworth Art Gallery, Manchester.



Ofili . . . first painter to win the Turner since 1985 PHOTO: EAMONN McCABE

Ofili is unafraid to incorporate contemporary politics into his work. One painting in the Turner Prize exhibition, No Woman No Cry, is a tribute to the dignity and suffering of Doreen Lawrence, the mother of the murdered teenager Stephen Lawrence.

Ofili was born in Manchester in 1968 and studied fine art at Chelsea School of Art before completing a master's in painting at the Royal College of Art.

The elephant dung, which he acquires free of charge from London Zoo, was inspired by a visit to Zimbabwe. He stands his paintings on the dung and sticks it to the canvas.

The other artists on the shortlist were Tacita Dean, Cathy de Monchaux and Sam Taylor-Wood.

A legend with the lens

OBITUARY
Freddie Young

FREDDIE Young, who has died aged 96, was the doyen of British cinematographers. He was a triple Oscar winner — for Lawrence Of Arabia, Doctor Zhivago and Ryan's Daughter — and in 1972 was named as only the second Fellow of the British Association for Film and Television Arts; the first was Alfred Hitchcock. Young deserved the honours, for his distinguished career, and as a recognition for the art he had represented for 50 years.

Whatever hand the director plays in the screenplay or in the editing rooms, a talented director of photography adds an indispensable, independent pair of eyes, to which novice directors often owe success and experienced ones learn to respect. Young provided that alter ego on a hundred movies. By 1972, at just 70, he had recently completed a 15-month slog on David Lean's Ryan's Daughter (1970). On the epic Lawrence Of Arabia (1962) his shimmering work added immeasurably to the film's stature.

He joined the industry during the silent era and was first credited as assistant cameraman on Rob Roy (1922). The first of his colour successes, Gabriel Pascal's Caesar And Cleopatra (1946), was not a happy experience. The huge sets, all-star cast and interminable schedule, proved an apprenticeship in stamina for Lean's similarly profligate Ryan's Daughter. However, it boosted Young's career and for 25 years he worked non-stop on A movies, often for MGM and for American directors working in Britain.

Surprisingly, in his mid-80s, Young turned director. Arthur's Hallowed Ground (1986) was a modest, personal film starring Jimmy Jewel as a cricket groundsman who is determined to protect his pitch against officialdom. It proved a charming coda to Young's career.

Twice married, he is survived by his wife Jean and son David.

Brian Baxter

Frederick (Freddie) A Young, cinematographer, born October 9,1902; died December 1, 1998

Squeals of horror

CINEMA
Xan Brooks

THERE'S a kid sitting two rows down from me at the Babe: Pig In The City preview. When the curtain goes back, this kid lets out a euphoric roar. Later on — at about the time when Mickey Rooney's clown has a heart attack and dies — he is led ashen-faced from the cinema. Minutes pass. On screen, a pit bull dog is simultaneously being throttled by his choke-chain and drowned head-first in a canal. Off screen, two more children flee soft-footed up the aisle.

This quiet exodus serves as a sideshow throughout Pig In The City. What we have here is a curious and perverse creature: a film with a death-wish; a picture that bites the hand that feeds it. I rather liked it.

Directed by George (Mad Max) Miller, Pig In The City arrives in Britain trailered by disastrous word of mouth. Its intricate post-production has run wildly over schedule. Most worrying were the reports of ghastly test screenings in the US, with unimpressed audiences apparently judging Miller's handling "too dark" by half. Well, at least they had that right. Dark? Pig In The City is positively char-grilled.

Let us assume that these incredible vanishing children are fans of the original Babe. They saw it during its Christmas 1995 release. They thrilled to its seamless mix of live-action animals with digital puppetry, its charming, witty script and low-key vegetarian agenda. So they mosey along to see the sequel and are confronted by an altogether different kettle of fish; less bright, less funny, less sweet-natured than the Babe of old. Poor lambs — it must be like peeling off some tinselly Christmas wrapping and finding a horror mask inside.

Full marks for daring, then. What's less expected is that Babe turns out all right in the end. Admittedly, Pig In The City is far from perfect. This has the thumbprints of a troubled editor all over it.

Its story is segmented into awkward chapters (Chaos Theory, Chaos Revisited). The set-up is perfunctory, the ending alarmingly abbreviated. Yet nestled in the middle lies the real meat of the film; and a surprisingly rich and exotic meat it is. Pig In The City — a voice-over informs us — is set "in a place just a little to the left of the 20th century", and hops quickly from the storybook-rustic farm owned by Boss Hoggett (James Cromwell) to a generic urban jungle where Big Ben, the Eiffel Tower and Sydney Opera House all share the same cramped stretch of skyline.

"Sheep-pig" Babe (again voiced by E G Daily) is in town to test his herding skills at the State Fair but gets separated from the matronly Mrs Hoggett (Magda Szubanski) and falls in with Mickey Rooney's rag-bag troupe of circus monkeys (voiced by the likes of Steve Wright, Glenne Headly and James Cosmo). Holing up at a fleapit hotel, he becomes a messiah-type ("His Pinkness") for the town's waifs and strays, feeding the hungry from a jar of jelly-beans before city pound workers break in, bust up the party and cart all and sundry off to the vivisection lab.

BUT IT is in these blackest moments that Miller's film comes into its own. Babe is pursued through a wrecking yard by two snarling attack dogs, while the gruelling hotel invasion has an unlikely echo of the notorious clearing-the-ghetto section from Schindler's List. And while no animals are actually shown to die (this is still a kids' film after all), many come perilously close. We are afforded a glimpse of a cheery goldfish expiring amid the shattered fragments of its bowl and a crippled hound lying broken at the roadside while his soul pays a brief detour to heaven (a scene that prompted a further child's more permanent detour to the exit door).

In this way, Pig In The City takes its animal inhabitants and turns them into a symbol for downtrodden, oppressed humanity; victims of a world bred in tooth and claw.

Such maudlin, melancholic vignettes are what work best. They leave an impression that lasts longer than all those clever animatronics or the incongruous pantomime of its knockabout finale.

Book-ended by schematic fluff, Miller's folly idles for a time in a fabulous hinterland which is more Delicatessen than Teletubbies, more art-house than kindergarten, and altogether too sad and cruel for the audience it's pitched at. So who cares if the kids couldn't take the pressure? Films like this are wasted on the young.

The words before the fall

Natasha Walter

Letters from a Lost Generation
edited by Mark Bostridge and Alan Bishop
Little, Brown 428pp £18.99

THERE is nothing to touch Vera Brittain's Testament Of Youth as an account of the first world war from the female point of view. In that memoir Brittain gave us the tale of a cool young woman who fell into the emotional and physical fury of the war, and she took her readers with her. I opened this volume of letters with the expectation of revisiting the experience and it certainly replays some of the same themes; but it has its own, rather different strengths.

Neatly edited by Mark Bostridge and Alan Bishop, this book doesn't confine itself to Vera's experience. It is a collection of the letters that she wrote to her brother, Edward; her beloved fiancé, Roland Leighton; their two friends, Victor Richardson and Geoffrey Thurlow; as well as the letters that they wrote to her and to one another.

Bostridge has, I think rightly, edited down Vera's own letters so that the details we know so well are reduced. Instead, the light is thrown on to the men in her circle, the four beautiful and intelligent young men who left school in 1914 and were all dead by 1918.

The emotional punch can be put down to various causes. One, although it sounds callous to say it, is the perfection of the tragedy played out in it. It reads with the clean finish of fiction, this tale of an innocent young woman standing among four brave men, all of whom die one by one, starting with her fiancé and ending with her brother. Blow falls after blow in this book, and the best fiction writer couldn't better the rhythms with which they fall.

There is the growing intimacy between Vera and Victor, ending with the finest letter he wrote: "Well, Vera, I may not write again, and so it is time to take a long, long adieu." He wrote that sentence two weeks before he received the head wound that later killed him. There are the excited letters and telegrams that pass between Vera and Roland as they plan their Christmas leave in 1915. Vera ends up in grand romantic style: "We have not fulfilled ourselves. Someday we shall live our roseate poem through." One turns the page to find the description of Roland's funeral that his father sent to Vera.

This collection of letters is surprisingly complete, and its to-and-fro of correspondence spans a curious mixture of styles and emotional pitches. The best letters, in terms of their cadences and expressiveness, are certainly Vera's and Roland's.

As high-minded, sheltered young people who had brought themselves up on Swinburne they shared an idiom that could shade into rhetoric, but at best was precise and charming. Watching their love grow on the page is an almost scarily moving thing.

When Roland gets back to France after his leave in which they become engaged, he writes: "All is unreal but the memory and the pain and the insatiable longing for something which one has loved. There is sunshine on the trees in the garden and a bird is singing behind the hedge. I feel as if someone had uprooted my heart to see how it was growing."

This book fleshes out the individuality of each of the young men through his language: the poetic grandeur of Roland, the gentler, simpler style of Edward, the slight brusqueness of Victor, the attractive, jumpy diffidence of Geoffrey. Alongside the passages that move up a notch to poetry, the writers are fluent and fascinating just on the business of their lives. They reflect on war — but they also live it, telling each other about the box of toffees that kept them going, or the dead horse they fell into that nearly finished them, their naked encounter with the prime minister or their first encounter with death.

But the fierce pull that the ideal of patriotic duty had over them unites them all. Its constant expression brings home to us a little more clearly quite why a generation of young men were prepared to kill and die in such gruesome ways. Right up to the end Roland reflects that war brings out all that is finest in human nature, and Geoffrey is worried that he might not distinguish himself in battle. "I wish for the School's sake only that it might be otherwise," he writes pathetically.

These letters also communicate the visceral excitement of young people keyed up at all the noise and danger and ferocity of war, and who at first, naturally, thought themselves inviolable. Even in 1916 Victor could write that trench life was, simply, "very enjoyable and a welcome change from England".

This enjoyment of the noise and clamour of war surfaces occasionally throughout the book, coexisting with the writers' growing sense of disillusionment and tragedy. The militarist ethos of the men she loved infected Vera, although she became a pacifist after the war. One month after her lover was killed, we find her writing to her brother, "I do condemn War in theory . . . but there are some things worse than even War, and I believe even wholesale murder to be preferable to atrophy and effeteness." This culture, in which poetry and individualism mixed with militarism and jingoism, died with that generation.

A reader today can note the strain in the writers' thoughts, their over-reliance on "glamour" and "heroism" in the face of mud and murder. But it would take an oddly cold reader not to feel for their unforced and passionate love for one another and for the natural world, and not to find tears in their eyes more than once before the final page, where the letters of condolence after Edward's death are laid out and Vera falls silent, left alone on the stage.

If you would like to order this book at the special price of £16 contact CultureShop

Mary Shelley's lost child

Ian Thomson

Maurice, or The Fisher's Cot
by Mary Shelley
Viking 154pp £9.99

THE cicadas make it Mediterranean, but this could easily be a drowsy churchyard in the English counties. The poet Shelley yearned "to be buried in so sweet a place". Violets still bloom wild on the graves there, and the dying Keats felt they were already growing over him. The Protestant cemetery in Rome is no ordinary boneyard.

In summer there's a pungent scent of dried blood from the abattoir nearby, and Gypsy kids squabble in the dust. Appropriately, the godless Shelley lies buried here next to Antonio Gramsci, the atheist theoretician of Italian Marxism.

Six years before his Roman burial in 1822, Shelley had settled briefly in Geneva with his wife and Lord Byron. That summer was a long, wild party. One night, a pair of glittering serpent eyes materialised in Mary's breasts and Shelley ran off shrieking towards the lake. The 24-year-old had to be sedated with opium. A thunderstorm ensued and a savage scribble of lightning announced an unexpected guest. Mathew "Monk" Lewis, the chain-rattling Gothic novelist, unsettled the Shelleys with tales of the slave trade and zombification that he'd witnessed recently in the West Indies.

Mary Shelley, then only 20, conceived Frankenstein in the same Geneva villa. Her book is a cornerstone of British science fiction. In early 1997, the owners of a Tuscan villa unearthed a long-lost children's story by Mary Shelley, and would Claire Tomalin like to have a look? It was exactly 200 years after Mary's death, and quite a scoop. Maurice, Or The Fisher's Cot was written in the high tide of Romanticism, two years after the publication of Frankenstein and on the eve of Keats's death from tuberculosis. Mary, who had by now lost all three of her children, wrote it in mourning and as a meagre consolation. Very soon her husband would be drowned in the turquoise of the Tyrrhenian Sea.

Unlike Frankenstein, however, Maurice has scant literary merit. Set on the Devon coast near Torquay, it's a thin fable about a boy's abduction from his family and his reunion 11 years later. The image of Maurice's shoes found in a field "about a mile from the river" was certainly more potent in an age when child-stealing was not so commonly reported. Yet there's little excitement or tension compared with the juvenile output of Robert Louis Stevenson, say, or Walter De La Mare.

Fortunately Claire Tomalin's long introduction is a transfixingly good read. It describes not only the document's discovery and likely genesis, but also Mary Shelley's madcap circle. In one of the strangest mysteries of the Shelley story, a baby girl was registered in the poet's name at a Naples orphanage in early 1819. Unaccountably, the infant was abandoned when the Shelleys moved up to Rome soon after.

The archives of the Santa Maria dell'Annunziata foundling hospital did not reveal the girl's identity. Instead, a baptismal certificate was discovered in a church nearby. Elena Adelaide Shelley was probably the daughter of an English aristocrat who'd become besotted with Shelley and, unaware of his attachment to Mary, followed him to Naples, where she left Elena to the poet's care. Two years later, Shelley found that the girl had died.

According to Tomalin, Elena Adelaide was a model for Maurice, the lost child in Mary Shelley's story. This seems plausible. Mary wrote it for the 11-year-old daughter of her friend and fellow exile in Italy, Lady Mountcashell, herself in a broken marriage. Tomalin provides a zingy account of the document's scientific authentication and her thrill at touching the parchment presumed missing for two centuries. The dog-eared pages, speckled brown with age, show where the quill had snagged on the vellum and caused the ink to spatter. A bibliophile's delight.

Seeing the Seitz

Nicholas Lezard

Over Here
by Raymond Seitz
Phoenix 372pp £7.99 pbk

THERE'S an old advertising story, in which Copywriter A wins a bet with Copywriter B about how he, A, could get B to read a page of close-set text. All he supplies is the headline: "This page is all about B". And this is why I found myself reading this indifferently written, pompous and distorted book right to the bitter end. Because it's all about us, the Brits.

Well, sort of. It's a view of the country as seen from the perspective of the US Ambassador to the Court of St James's, which means that his idea of reality in contemporary Britain is not the same as ours. (You don't see much with your head up the Queen's bum.)

The first nasty moment is on page 6, in a little anecdote designed to alert us to his wife's earthy good sense. A conductor turns up late for dinner, saying his Mozart rehearsal had over-run. "'Ah, Mozart,' I said with a sophisticated tilt of my head. 'I think there are only two categories of composers: first, Mozart, and second, all the rest,' at which point I heard a voice behind me say, 'What about Marvin Gaye?'" In other words: two banal opinions for the price of one.

But that's positively cute compared with what we get a few pages later. "The Americans had plans to develop a naval staging post and airstrip on a spit of sand named Diego Garcia . . . In the 1991 Gulf War, Diego Garcia finally proved its worth." I thought that Diego Garcia once had an indigenous population, which was booted off the island to make way for military knick-knacks. Does Seitz know nothing of this?

Still, the rest of the book is more or less straightforward unintentional comedy — apart from the underlying disturbing thought that we are even less well ruled than we thought we were when such Pooterish dolts can command influential positions. (And Seitz, a career diplomat rather than a wealthy patron, is comparatively top-drawer.)

Seitz actually identifies his problem — without making the connection that it applies to him: "For a diplomat there is a fine line between educating your own government about another government's point of view and becoming an advocate for that same point of view. In the language of Foggy Bottom, this is called 'clientitis'."

Seitz is feverish with clientitis; witness his description of the argy-bargy he had with Jean Kennedy Smith, who, as ambassador to Ireland, trampled all over the British (and Seitz's) delicate feelings: "It became obvious she wanted to promote the reunification of both parts of Ireland, even if one of the parts happened to lie in the United Kingdom." By any diplomatic standards, this is knuckle-duster stuff.

Still, the book is curiously gripping, in so far as we squirm with pleasure when anyone from America tickles our tummies. Seitz loves us Brits to bits and the book's ending is genuinely moving. He's probably not a bad chap. Once, during the ERM crisis, he was talking to Major at No 10 when they heard a crash. "What was that?" asked Major. "The pound?" said Seitz.

If you would like to order this book at the special price of £6.99 contact CultureShop

Poison pen pals

Sally Vincent

Sir Vidia's Shadow: A Friendship Across Five Continents
by Paul Theroux
Hamish Hamilton 376pp £17.99

YOU can see how they came to hit it off in the first place. Brave wandering souls, men of the wide world, seekers after Truth, writers who took their work as seriously as they took themselves, which was very seriously indeed. When V S Naipaul spoke of "infies", Paul Theroux knew he meant "inferiors"; those who were not as they. There was an inclusiveness in the dimunition that appealed to a prospect of superior intimacy, for surely a man would never say "infie" to an infie? Twenty-four years old and hoping to write for a living, you'd have to be a total stranger to vanity to pass up the chance of a mutual admiration society with an established literary lion just because he occasionally threw out the odd intimation of an overweening personality. Nor, after 30-odd years of the fastidious intellectual and emotional propinquity men call friendship, would you expect to be uninfected by a similar arrogance.

Theroux knew in advance of the publication of this memoir that it would be misunderstood by "literary philistines and lazy intellects". Theroux laments the alacrity with which media infies have leapt to conclude that his labours merely outline something as mundane as a quarrel or, worse, a literary feud. Forestalling further idle speculation, he directs philistines towards Ford Madox Ford on the subject of his friendship with Joseph Conrad as a suitably vigorous case for literary comparison. He has been still more generously informative with parallels in the book: confessing the difficulties inherent in embarking on such an original and unique work, he offers the precursory influences of Boswell and Johnson, Henry James, Turgenev, Gorky, Tolstoy, Flaubert, Beckett and Joyce. Good company, it seems, is of the essence.

The "shadow" of the title is a little puzzling in this context. If a shadow is the shape we cast when we stand between light and substance, it is also the thing that proves we are not, as we might fear, holes in the air. Much of Theroux's test indicates, with and without irony, that he perceived himself as Naipaul's shadow in the sense of follower and helpmeet, page to his knight, attendant upon his most prosaic whim, accepting without rancour the most astringent terms of reciprocity from a man he also took to be an inveterate snob, a shameless free-loader, whoremonger and woman-hater. Yet from the same account we learn that, like all self-absorbed people, Naipaul was never ambiguous about his expression of himself, that his ruthless candour informed the relationship defined here as a friendship over 30 years and, yes, five continents, and that in that time and space he trusted himself to his friend without self-editing his many vices and solipsisms.

Apart from its exceptional articulacy, this was a long-term intimacy like any other between flawed individuals. Sadly, it seems to have been that articulacy that has unbalanced this scenario. A mean remark between friends is just that; a secret exposed, a small unlovely facet of the whole person to which the other has been made privy. Once such expressions are written down and nailed to print they are transformed into declarations.

Theroux's perspective is necessarily passed along a prism of the pain of personal rejection. The man he remembers is eternally the man who closed the account, the traitor who for no known reason and with no explanation or apology, ended the friendship. To have the capacity to do such a brutal thing is infinitely mysterious, yet you cannot invite a friend or lover to collude in their own abandonment and walk calmly into the primal anguish it evokes.

Theroux describes the final, accidental encounter with Naipaul when Naipaul's advice on how to bear rejection was to "take it on the chin". In the next breath, as it were, Theroux feels himself to be gloriously liberated, free at last to shine his own light on all that went before.

But again the perspective clouds narrative. It denies any preamble or clue to the break-up while simultaneously describing with fatal chronology a series of events that could have led nowhere else. One hears the wail of a downhearted, frail woman divesting herself irrelevantly for the loss of her lover. SHE stole my man. He left me for THAT! For Sir Vidia married. Two months after the death of his first wife he had the temerity to re-enter matrimony with a lady unknown to Theroux.

According to acquaintances, she was a kind of Pakistani Glenda Slagg, an adventuress who pretended knowledge of and passion for Naipaul's writing in order to commend herself to his vanity and his bed. Thereafter Theroux received a *billet doux* from an American bookseller, offering him options on first editions of his own books, signed by himself in happier days and presented to Naipaul and his late partner. The lady, he mused, was house clearing in her traditional way. Later there was a fax, unsolicited, scruffy, semi-literate and hostile from the lady herself.

Theroux cherishes the obvious impertinence and vulgarity of these missives. Knowing how profoundly offended Naipaul would be, how much he would suffer for the gracelessness of the documents — good grief, the fellow was so squeamish he'd rather starve to death than eat a vegetable "tainted" by a meaty spoon, rather lie awake than sleep on a bed "tainted" by the momentary proximity of a workman's bum — Theroux faxed each of them, and posted them through the mail in case of interception, that Naipaul might countenance the evidence of his error of judgment. Knowing also, of course, that Naipaul was never a man to stand corrected.

The infies are wrong, though. This is not and never was a literary feud.

Writer's block . . . Theroux publicly bemoans the end of his private friendship with V S Naipaul PHOTOGRAPH: MARTIN GODWIN

Scottish poet wins award with debut novel

Dan Glaister

cession the Guardian Fiction Prize has been won by a debut novelist. Jackie Kay was presented with the award and a £5,000 cheque for her novel, Trumpet, the story of a fictional Scottish jazz trumpeter, Joss Moody, who on his death is revealed to be a woman.

Kay, an award-winning poet, was presented with the prize by lawyer and writer Anthony Julius at a ceremony at the Commonwealth Club in London last week. The prize, which last year was won by Canadian Anne Michaels for her debut novel, Fugitive Pieces, is Britain's longest-running award, established in 1965.

Stephen Moss, chairman of the judges, said: "For the way it marries ambition with understatement; for the strength of the writing; for its fascinating subject material; and for the way it engages with the great emotions without ever becoming sentimental, we decided to award the 1998 Guardian Fiction Prize to Jackie Kay's Trumpet."


Jackie Kay: prize-winning debut

The novel, which was inspired by a newspaper report about the death of a 74-year-old jazz trumpeter, Billy Tipton, who was then received ecstatic reviews. "The voices in this tender, compassionate work were still singing in my head a couple of weeks after I'd finished it," wrote Christina Patterson in the Observer.

Catherine Lockerbie said in the Scotsman: "Her language is tight, paced, tunnelling into the dark places of hurt and confusion."

Kay, who was born in Edinburgh in 1961 to a Scottish mother and a Nigerian father, was adopted by a Glaswegian couple. Her first poetry collection, The Adoption Papers, published in 1991, won the Saltire and Forward prizes. Her second collection, Other Lovers, won the Somerset Maugham Prize. Last year she published Bessie, a biography of blues singer Bessie Smith.

"I've always been interested in people creating an identity, the fluidity of inventing themselves," Kay has said. "Women who dressed up as men captured my imagination — Marlene Dietrich, Greta Garbo, Josephine Baker. Billy Tipton ... your life like that: he was a self-made man."

Other writers on the short list were Derek Beaven, William Boyd, Alan Hollinghurst, Edward St Aubyn and Liz Jensen. Previous winners include Seamus Deane, Pat Barker, Pauline Melville, J G Ballard, Beryl Bainbridge, John Berger and Clive Barry.

This year's judges included critic Alex Clark, Lindsay Duguid of the Times Literary Supplement, novelist Tibor Fischer, critic Maya Jaggi, Anthony Julius, writer and broadcaster Mark Lawson, and Brookside executive producer Phil Redmond.

Trumpet by Jackie Kay is published by Picador (£12.99)

Paperback fiction

Lesley McDowell

In the City by the Sea, by Kamila Shamsie (Granta, £9.99)

THE first novel by 25-year-old Shamsie, this is a colourful and peripatetic view of politics in Pakistan seen through the eyes of 11-year-old Hasan. Barred from adult discussion by balustrades and half-shut doors, he sits outside when everyone thinks he has gone to sleep, to discover half-truths and bits of stories. An interesting and promising novel.

First Frost: An Anthology of Winter Reading, edited by Charlotte Cole (Women's Press, £8)

SOME of these are more evocative of winter than others. From Margaret Atwood and Carol Shields, there are expertly woven little tales: mature journalist Marcia who wants more than life has given her, and a group of friends who performed under Madame Bessant's instruction. A L Kennedy tells a tale of goblin families, Helen Dunmore of girls turned to ice. All in all, a pretty even selection, but what stood out most was Mary Flanagan's wonderful tale of reluctant bride Nora Winkle arriving at her wedding in a purple wedding dress.

Beyond the Glass, by Antonia White (Virago, £6.99)

STAR of Virago's Modern Classics in 1979, White has enjoyed an enduring popularity. Last in the Frost In May series, this delicate but powerful novel traces the descent of Clara Batchelor into madness and temporary institutionalisation in the notorious Bethlem Asylum. In many ways, this is the most impressive of the series, with its bewilderingly honest portrayal of the breakdown of a woman and an artist. Clara's story is partly drawn from White's own collapse, her relationship with Catholicism and the influence of her adored but repressive father.

Crossing the Border: Tales of Erotic Ambiguity, edited by Lisa Tuttle (Indigo, £7.99)

THIS collection of stories of "rebels against gender assignment" includes writers as diverse as Angela Carter, Ruth Rendell, Poppy Z Brite and Joyce Carol Oates. Focusing on the fear and the attraction of the "other", it takes in transvestism, Internet lust and androgynous wood girls in a variety of the weird and the wild. This gree that unsettles but also carries the erotic charge of the unknown. A fascinating and vibrant collection of new and already published work.

Woman with Three Aeroplanes, by Lilian Faschinger (Review, £6.99)

IF YOU like your fiction cool and sparse with an air of danger, this is for you: a collection of short stories by Austrian writer Faschinger about the need to leave and the inability to do so — leaving cities, leaving people, leaving memories. There is a calmness about her stories which is occasionally punctuated by the threat of possible violence, sometimes followed through, and conveys the frustration felt by those unable to make changes in their lives.

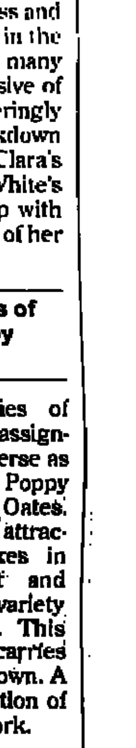




ILLUSTRATION: ANN HOBDAY

Putting the gosh into goshawks

Mark Cocker

EVERY time a new one appears before us it is a major event akin to the appearance of some rare natural phenomenon like a comet. But the latest wonderful television series from David Attenborough and the BBC — The Life Of Birds — has hit British screens with the force of El Niño. All my friends are talking about it, the media are full of it, and the bookshops are crammed full with the accompanying Christmas bestseller.

Yet it was interesting to go out into the world of nature and birds in the aftermath of the latest episode in the series. My companion on the outing is himself an occasional film-maker and ecologist with a special interest in plants and insects. His most distinctive quality is an Attenborough-like energy, and while I'm (unsuccessfully) scanning the horizon for birds, he passionately beckons me to come and look at a tiny square of rabbit-grazed turf he's discovered. "Look!" he shouts, kneeling on the dewy grass and bidding me to examine his micro-plot. "What's going on here" — and he points to the 3mm-high vegetation — "is exactly the same as what's going on in those woods or even in a rainforest: the same complex web of competition and inter-relationships, but on a tiny scale. I call them 'worlds'."

True enough, I do find an extraordinary and intricate "world" of tiny lichens, mosses, small plants and the emerging bulge of some minuscule fungus all growing in a patch the size of your palm. Without my friend's imagination and perception I would normally miss all this. In fact I take two steps back and his world disappears completely, merging with an empty stretch of coastal Suffolk.

On David Attenborough's programmes we also encounter the world of nature as we seldom see it ourselves. But in this instance we miss it for want of resources and opportunity. The television gives us a carefully selected montage of sexy snippets. The birds are either copulating or killing each other or some other unfortunate victim, and we are normally so close up to them that the camera appears to be attached to the creature's wing. Often we are left gasping not so much at the subject but the cameraman's art. Take the example of Attenborough's hunting goshawk, filmed as it runs across the tangled forest floor after a rat, and all shot from an impossible rodent's-eye view. Most people only ever see goshawks as specks, and to be completely honest I go and look for goshawks but usually don't even see one at all.

The programmes also detach us from any real sense of geographical location. One minute seabirds are falling out the sky on Lord Howe Island, the next minute we are immersed in Californian surf, and the next we are on the Galapagos islands, perched near a brown pelican.

I believe Attenborough is an outstanding film-maker and a wonderful ambassador for wildlife. With the likes of Jacques Cousteau, Peter Scott and Roger Tory Peterson he has done more than anyone to shape Western attitudes towards nature. But Planet Attenborough is not a planet we normally inhabit. It's out there in the stratosphere of fantasy and illusion, and one of its effects could be to make the real world seem an anti-climax. However, my friend's world, his 15 square centimetres of turf, is accessible to us all. In fact, it's right there now beneath your feet.

Chess Leonard Barden

EFIM GELLER, one of the golden Soviets who long dominated world chess, recently died in Moscow aged 73. A six-time candidate for the highest title, Geller was famous as an imaginative tactician, as an innovator in theory, and most of all as a *bête noire* of world champions. He had a lifetime plus score over Botvinnik, Fischer, Smyslov and Petrosian as well as 6-6 with Tal.

Geller came to top chess at 24, late in life for a grandmaster. He had served in the Soviet air force during the second world war, came from the seaport of Odessa, and walked with a rolling sailor's gait. He chainsmoked, often got into time trouble, and was rather monolingual. But he was relaxed and pleasant, often flashed a gold-toothed smile, and was well liked and respected.

He was only a candidate master, the equivalent today of a lowly 2300 rating, in his first Soviet championship. Yet such was his creative energy that within four years he was sixth in the 1953 candidates, and he stayed at that level until 1971. He won seven gold medals with the Soviet team in the Olympiads.

Geller was an accurate analyst who saved Botvinnik from defeat by Fischer in a critical game at Varna 1962, and was coach to Spassky in 1972 and to Karpov in 1978. This didn't stop him crushing an angry Karpov when Anatoly wanted a quick draw in the 1976 Soviet Championship — Efim Petrovich could be a man of independent spirit.

Geller later described today's game, played in his first USSR championship and full of rich tactical complexities, as "close to my heart". Comments are abbreviated from The Soviet Championships by Cafferty and Taimanov (Cadogan, £19.99), a fine review of these great events.

Kotov v Geller, USSR Ch 1949

1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 g6 3 Nc3 Bg7 4 g3 0-0 5 Bg2 d6 6 Nf3 Nbd7 7 0-0 e5 8 e4 exd4 9 Nxd4 Nc5 10 f3?! Too static compared with 10 h3 Re8 11 Re1. **Nfd7 11 Be3 c6 12 Qd2 a5 13 Rad1 Ne5** "Prelude to a combinational storm" – Geller. **14 b3 a4 15 Nde2?**

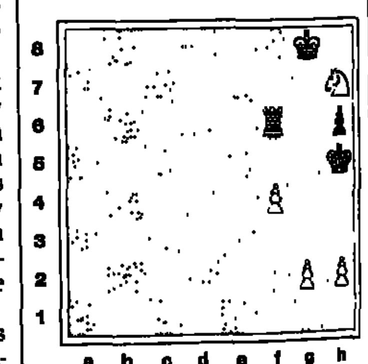
15 f4! axb3 16 fxe5 bxa2 17 Nxa2 keeps White in the game.

15 . . . axb3! 16 Bxc5 Nxc4 17 Qc1 bxa2 Later analysis showed b2! as stronger. **18 Nxa2 Qa5 19 Qxc4 Be6 20 Qc1 dxc5 21 Nac3 b5 22 Nb1 b4 23 Nf4 Bb3 24 Rd6?** Botvinnik gave 24 Nd2! Bxd1 25 Rxd1 as a tougher defence, when Black's passed pawns lose their dynamism.

24 . . . c4! 25 Rxc6 c3! 26 Nd5 Bxd5 27 exd5 Qxd5 28 f4 Qd4+ 29 Kh1 Ra2 30 Bf3 Rb2 31 f5 Be5 32 Qe1 Rd8 33 Be4 Kg7! 34 f6+ Or 34 Rg1 Qf2 35 Qxf2 Rxf2 36 fxg6 hxg6 and 37 . . . f5.

Kg8 35 Ra6 h5! A hallmark attack of the golden Soviet style; after *pinning White down on the other* flank, Black switches to the king. **36 Ra5 h4 37 Bxg6 Rxh2+! 38 Kxh2 Bxg3+ 39 Qxg3 hxg3+ 40 Kh3 fxg6 41 Resigns.**

No 2553



White mates in four moves, against any defence (by E B Cook 1861). This problem is featured in the new issue of The Problemist, the magazine for keen solvers and composers. For a free specimen copy of a supplement with easier problems, write to C Russ, BCPS, 30 Welson Road, Folkestone, Kent CT20 2NP.

No 2552: 1 Rxe4! fxe4 2 Qe6+ Kh8 3 Qxh6! and if gxh6 4 Nf7+ Kg8 5 Nxh6 mate. The game actually ended 3 . . . Nf5 4 Ng6+ Kg8 5 Rxd5! Resigns.

Quick crossword no. 448

Across

1 Floor show (7)
8 Expand (7)
9 Enthusiastic applause (7)
10 Name for position (7)
11 Twist (5)
13 Big guns (9)
15 Filled with [illegible]
18 Glorify (5)
21 The head (slang) (7)
22 Waterproof cloth (7)
23 Hide (7)
24 Deviate from subject (7)

Down

1 Go over — angry (5)
2 British Prime Minister (5)
3 Through which trains run (7,6)
4 Occupier (6)
5 Slumbered very deeply (5,4,1,3)
6 Come (6)
7 Guard (6)
12 Large black bird (4)
14 Genuine — old Spanish coin (4)
15 Raid (6)
16 Use up (6)
17 Countless — not informed (6)
19 Joint between foot and leg (5)
20 Capital and port near the ruins of Carthage (5)

Last week's solution

S	U	B	M	A	C	H	I	N	E	G	U	N
E		E		C		U		E		L		I
A	N	A	G	R	A	M		W	R	O	N	G
		R		E		A		O		B		H
H	A	I	L		I	N	D	O	L	E	N	T
A		N		D		E		M				M
R	E	G	A	I	N		P	E	S	E	T	A
M				S		Y		R		R		R
O	C	C	U	P	I	E	R		R	U	L	E
N		E		E		L		U		D		
I	D	L	E	R		L	A	N	D	I	N	G
C		L		S		O		I		T		O
A	T	O	N	E	S	W	I	T	S	E	N	D

Bridge Zia Mahmood

A CORRESPONDENT, *Simon Fairbrother, has suggested that* bridge might be improved if bidding judgment were, as he puts it, "more proportionately rewarded". If you bid and make 2NT instead of 1NT with an overtrick, he points out, you receive no extra bonus [illegible] bid and make 3NT, you collect 500 for not having stopped in 2NT plus [illegible] each additional level at which you bid and make a contract, so that judging to play in three hearts making exactly is worth more than an overtrick in two hearts?

The answer, I am afraid, is that old habits die hard. While Mr Fairbrother's suggestion is an excellent one in principle, too many bridge players would have to make so revolutionary a change in their approach to the game that the idea is unlikely to gain acceptance. A pity, for I think bridge needs such innovations if it is to become sufficiently exciting to attract meaningful sponsorship. Cricket was in danger of becoming, if not extinct, then at least moribund until the arrival of Kerry Packer and the development of the one-day game — I wonder if the same might not be done for bridge?

I'm sure my readers have their own ideas on how to make the game *more attractive, and I'd very much* like to hear from you. My own opinion is that the game is often too slow to make interesting viewing — perhaps it should be timed in the same way as chess. We have become too [illegible] adrenalin ought to be flowing at its fastest. Nobody ever bids [illegible] top, and nobody ever doubles without having the contract beaten in his own hand. As for redoubles — I can't remember when I last saw one made for blood and not for rescue. The bonuses for grand slam contracts and for making *redoubled contracts* should be increased enormously — and so should the penalty for the first doubled undertrick. This would encourage sharper doubling and re-doubling, a sadly neglected art.

The authorities have an irrational dread of the psychic bid, to the extent that everything legally possible is done to prevent such manoeuvres from disrupting the languid precision of the opponents' auction. When bridge was young, psychics were a source of amusement and amazement and did much for the popularity of the game. A leading exponent was a man called S Garton Churchill. He was the first player to *use the weak no trump* in serious tournament play. This was a typical Churchill hand:

North
♠ J 6 5
[illegible]
♣ 9 7 2

West
♠ K Q 3
♥ J 10 7
♣ A Q
♦ 10 8 7 3 2

East
♠ A 10 9 8 4
♥ K Q 5 4
♣ K 6 3
♦ 5

South
♠ 7 2
♥ A 9 6
♣ J 10 8 5 4
♦ A K 6

South	West	North Churchill	East
1 ♦	Pass	1♠!	Dble
Pass	Pass	2♥!	Pass
2 ♠	Dble	3♣	Pass
Pass	3NT	Pass	Redble
Dble	Pass	Pass	
Pass	Pass	Pass	

North led a club. One down. It may not have been bridge by today's standards — but don't you think it was a lot more fun?

Football Premiership: Middlesbrough 2 Newcastle United 2

Dab-hand Dabizas earns stripes

Michael Walker

A PULSATING 90 minutes down by the Riverside that featured four goals, countless chances and two streakers, ended with local pride, prejudice and, most importantly, points shared. All that was lacking in a compelling game, Alan Shearer apart, was a partridge in a pear tree.

Astonishingly, at the final whistle some home fans booed, but their annoyance subsided quickly. Disappointed to have seen their side surrender a lead twice, they had to accept that this was all that a derby should be — fast and passionate.

There were also moments of genuine skill, Duncan Ferguson providing most of them in the Newcastle forward line and Paul Gascoigne directing Boro's play with intelligence and restraint.

However, the major blemish for Boro for a second Sunday running was the surrender of two points late on. Last time it had been Nicolas Anelka's 90th-minute equaliser at Highbury; last Sunday it was Nicos Dabizas's looping 83rd-minute header which saw another two points relinquished.

Middlesbrough are still unbeaten at home in more than 13 months, but this was their ninth draw in 16 Premiership games this season. And while that stability is welcome, their manager Bryan Robson was disappointed.

"They had more possession, but we created all the decent chances," he said. "In the first half I wasn't pleased, but in the second half we stepped it up and their keeper made two or three outstanding stops."

While it was possible to see the honesty of that perspective, it was also possible to agree with Ruud Gullit's analysis: "They were only dangerous from free-kicks and corners. I thought we played well. We've taken a step forward. A couple of weeks ago I don't think we'd have got an equaliser," he added.

Yet Newcastle did so twice, a measure of blossoming spirit as much as Gullit's tactical nous. Confidence is returning, as witnessed by the reaction to Andy Townsend's 13th-minute opener. Gascoigne exploited slack marking at a corner and found Townsend 16 yards out; receiving at an awkward height, he scooped a forceful volley into the top corner.

Middlesbrough, though, lost momentum, and Newcastle took over. But Robson was right: just one Newcastle chance arrived before Laurent Charvet scored. That was on the half-hour, and eight minutes later Keith Gillespie found Ferguson's forehead. Dean Gordon cleared, but the ball fell to Charvet, who registered his first goal with a searing 20-yard volley.

The visitors might have been expected to build on that after half-time, but Gascoigne and Townsend seized the initiative — though Gascoigne refused to seize one of the two buxom streakers.

After he and Hamilton Ricard had worked space for Colin Cooper on the edge of the area, Cooper's shot looked as if it would be blocked by Aaron Hughes. Instead, the ball ballooned off the Irishman and over Steve Harper.

This was especially harsh on Harper because he had made two important saves before Dabizas equalised, and another in the last few seconds.

Dabizas had been on the pitch long enough to touch the ball once before he supplied a strong header to Charvet's deep cross to beat Mark Schwarzer.

That ensured a share of the points with Middlesbrough remaining seventh. On a day of relentless, enjoyable activity they were the only things that did not move.



Quiet, please . . . referee Graham Poll gives Blackburn Rovers' caretaker-manager Tony Parkes and Brian Kidd a talking-to during their club's match against Charlton Athletic at Ewood Park. Kidd, assistant manager at Manchester United for the past seven years, left Old Trafford last week to take over as manager of Rovers PHOTOGRAPH: MICHAEL STEELE

Football results and tables

FA CARLING PREMIERSHIP
Aston Villa 1, Man Utd 1; Blackburn 1, Charlton 0; Derby 0, Arsenal 0; Everton 0, Chelsea 0; Leeds 4, West Ham 0; Leicester 2, Southampton 0; Middlesbrough 2, Newcastle 2; Sheffield Wed 3, Nottm Forest 2; Tottenham 2, Liverpool 1; Wimbledon 2, Coventry 1.

	P	W	D	L	F	A	PTS
Aston Villa	15	8	6	1	23	13	30
Man Utd	15	8	5	2	31	17	29
Leeds	16	6	8	2	26	14	26
Arsenal	16	6	8	2	15	7	26
West Ham	16	7	5	4	20	20	26
Chelsea	14	6	7	1	22	13	25
Middlesbrough	16	5	9	2	26	19	24
Wimbledon	16	6	5	5	21	28	23
Liverpool	16	6	4	6	27	21	22
Derby	16	5	7	4	15	14	22
Tottenham	16	6	4	6	21	24	22
Leicester	16	5	6	5	18	18	21
Newcastle	16	5	5	6	21	21	20
Sheff Wed	16	5	4	7	17	17	19
Everton	16	4	7	5	10	15	19
Charlton	16	3	7	6	22	24	16
Coventry	16	4	3	9	14	23	15
Blackburn	16	3	3	10	15	24	12
Nottm Forest	16	2	5	9	14	27	11
Southampton	16	2	4	10	12	33	10

NATIONWIDE LEAGUE
First Division
Bristol City 2, Sheffield Utd 0; Bury 2, WBA 0; Huddersfield 4, C Palace 0; Ipswich 1, Birmingham 0; Oxford 0, Bradford C 1; Portsmouth 2, Crewe 0; QPR 3, Port Vale 2; Sunderlnd 1, Stockport 0; Swindon 1, Norwich 1; Tranmere 1, Grimsby 2; Watford 0, Barnsley 0; Wolves 1, Bolton 1.

	P	W	D	L	F	A	PTS
Sunderland	21	13	7	1	49	15	46
Ipswich	22	12	6	4	31	12	42
Watford	22	10	7	5	37	31	37
Norwich	21	10	6	5	35	27	36
Bolton	21	9	8	4	40	30	35
Huddersfield	22	10	5	7	33	36	35
Birmingham	22	10	5	7	30	23	35
Bradford	21	10	4	7	36	25	34
Sheff Utd	22	9	6	7	33	35	33
Wolverhampton	22	9	6	7	31	22	33
Grimsby	22	9	5	8	27	26	32
West Brom	21	9	3	9	39	37	30
Barnsley	22	6	9	7	32	30	27
Crystal Palace	19	8	3	8	30	34	27
Bury	22	7	6	9	17	24	27
Stockport	22	5	11	6	20	27	26
QPR	22	7	4	11	25	32	25
Portsmouth	22	6	6	10	31	35	24
Swindon	22	6	6	10	30	35	24
Oxford Utd	22	6	5	11	25	36	23
Tranmere	21	4	10	7	27	33	22
Port Vale	22	6	4	12	26	43	22
Bristol City	22	4	7	11	32	49	19
Crewe	21	2	5	14	21	46	11

Second Division
Blackpool 1, Chesterfield 1.

	P	W	D	L	F	A	PTS
Stoke	20	14	1	5	30	15	43
Walsall	20	12	3	5	30	24	39
Fulham	19	12	3	4	26	16	39
Preston	19	9	7	3	34	19	34
Gillingham	20	8	9	3	29	18	33
Chesterfield	19	9	5	5	21	13	32
Luton	18	8	5	5	24	19	29
Man City	20	7	8	5	24	19	29
Reading	19	8	5	6	23	25	29
Wigan	20	8	4	8	26	20	28
Millwall	20	7	7	6	19	21	28
Bournemouth	18	7	6	5	29	20	27
Blackpool	20	7	6	7	25	25	27
Wrexham	20	6	6	8	20	27	24
Colchester	19	6	6	7	19	23	24
Bristol Rovers	20	5	8	7	24	25	23
Burnley	20	6	5	9	22	30	23
York	19	5	6	8	23	33	21
Notts County	19	5	6	8	21	25	21
Macclesfield	20	4	7	9	17	26	19
Northampton	20	3	9	8	18	23	18
Oldham	20	4	5	11	19	32	17
Wycombe	20	3	6	11	16	26	15
Lincoln City	19	3	3	13	19	36	12

Third Division

	P	W	D	L	F	A	PTS
Cardiff	20	11	4	5	23	16	37
Halifax	20	10	6	4	30	18	36
Mansfield	20	10	4	6	31	23	34
Leyton Orient	20	9	7	4	25	21	34
Rotherham	20	9	6	5	37	24	33
Scunthorpe	20	10	3	7	35	33	33
Brentford	18	11	0	7	34	26	33
Cambridge Utd	19	10	3	6	32	24	33
Peterborough	20	9	3	8	34	26	30
Darlington	18	8	4	6	27	22	28
Brighton	20	9	1	10	24	28	28
Plymouth	19	8	3	8	23	19	27
Swansea	19	7	6	6	23	20	27
Hartlepool	20	7	4	9	29	31	25
Exeter	19	7	4	8	20	22	25
Southend	20	6	6	8	22	27	24
Rochdale	19	6	6	7	18	21	24
Shrewsbury	20	6	6	8	16	23	24
Chester	19	4	9	6	23	28	21
Barnet	20	6	3	11	21	35	21
Carlisle	18	5	5	8	16	19	20
Scarborough	20	5	3	12	21	31	18
Torquay	20	3	9	8	20	29	18
Hull	20	4	3	13	18	36	16

FA CUP
Second Round
Cardiff 3, Hednesford 1; Darlington 1, Man City 1; Doncaster 0, Rushden & D 0, Exeter 2, Bristol Rvrs 2; Fulham 4, Hartlepool 2, Kingstonian 0, Leyton Orient 0; Notts Co 1, Wigan 1; Lincoln C 4, Stevenage 1; Luton 1, Hull 2; Macclesfield 4, Cambridge U 1, Mansfield 1, Southport 2; Oldham 1, Brentford 1; Preston 2, Walsall 0; Rochdale 0, Rotherham 0, Scunthorpe 2, Bedlington 0, Swansea 1, Stoke 0, Torquay 0, Bournemouth 1; Wrexham 2, York 1. Wycombe 1, Plymouth 1; Yeovil 2, Northampton 0.

SCOTTISH PREMIER LEAGUE
Dundee U 1, St Johnstone 1; Hearts 2, Celtic 1; Kilmarnock 4, Aberdeen 0; Motherwell P, Dundee P; Rangers 1, Dunfermline 1.

	P	W	D	L	F	A	PTS
Rangers	16	9	4	3	30	14	31
Kilmarnock	17	8	7	2	25	10	31
Celtic	17	7	5	5	33	19	26
St Johnstone	16	6	[illegible]	4	[illegible]	22	21
Hearts	16	6	4	6	18	20	22
Dundee	15	5	4	6	14	20	19
Dundee Utd	17	4	6	7	17	[illegible]	18
Motherwell	16	4	[illegible]	[illegible]	13	22	[illegible]
Dunfermline	17	2	[illegible]	6	14	24	[illegible]
Aberdeen	17	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]

SCOTTISH LEAGUE
First Division
Airdrie 2, Clydebank 0; Falkirk [illegible], Ayr 0; Morton [illegible]; Hibernian [illegible], Raith P; Hamilton P, Stranraer [illegible]; St Mirren 2.

	P	W	D	L	F	A	PTS
Hibernian	18	11	5	2	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]
Falkirk	18	10	5	3	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]
Ayr	18	10	3	5	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]
Airdrie	18	9	3	6	20	[illegible]	[illegible]
St Mirren	18	8	4	[illegible]	16	17	[illegible]
Clydebank	18	5	7	6	17	20	22
Hamilton	17	5	5	7	24	26	20
G Morton	18	4	[illegible]	11	17	24	15
Raith	17	3	6	8	15	24	[illegible]
Stranraer	18	3	1	14	16	36	10

Second Division

	P	W	D	L	F	A	PTS
Livingston	17	12	4	1	34	18	40
Inverness CT	17	10	5	2	35	24	35
Clyde	17	8	5	4	26	18	29
Stirling	17	9	1	7	29	30	28
Alloa	17	7	3	7	37	25	24
Partick	17	7	1	9	18	21	22
Arbroath	17	5	4	8	16	23	19
East Fife	17	5	3	9	22	35	18
Queen of South	17	3	4	10	17	25	13
Forfar	17	2	4	11	17	32	10

Third Division

	P	W	D	L	F	A	PTS
Ross County	17	13	0	4	44	18	39
Brechin	17	9	6	2	22	13	33
Stenhousemuir	17	9	3	5	26	17	30
Dumbarton	17	7	4	6	22	17	25
Albion	17	7	2	8	22	33	23
Berwick	17	5	7	5	21	21	22
Queen's Park	17	5	5	7	22	22	20
East Stirling	17	3	7	7	18	20	16
Cowdenbeath	17	4	2	11	16	32	14
Montrose	17	3	4	10	17	37	13

SCOTTISH CUP
First round
Arbroath 1, Partick 2; Dumbarton 1, Livingston 1; Queens Pk 2, Berwick 0; Stenhousemuir 1, Alloa 1.

Sports Diary Shiv Sharma

Chelsea cup woe after first defeat

CHELSEA suffered their first defeat in 19 games this season — just one match short of a club record — and it sent them crashing out of the Worthington Cup against Wimbledon in the quarter-finals.

The Dons went ahead after 19 minutes when Robbie Earle rose above the Blues' defence to score with the easiest of headers from six yards. Fifteen minutes from time they doubled the lead after Frank Leboeuf was adjudged to have brought down Marcus Gayle in the 18 yard box, and Michael Hughes lashed home the penalty. Stung by their predicament, the holders moved up a gear. Four minutes from time Gianluca Vialli pulled one back but his team failed to find another to force extra-time.

When Joe Kinnear's perennial underdogs meet Tottenham Hotspur at the end of next month, it will be their third appearance in the semi-finals of the competition in three seasons. Spurs beat Manchester United 3-1 with two headers from Chris Armstrong and a late strike by David Ginola. Teddy Sheringham got United's consolation goal.

In the other two quarter-finals, First Division leaders Sunderland brushed aside Luton 3-0 and will meet Leicester, who beat Blackburn Rovers, the only goal of the match coming from Neil Lennon in the 67th minute.

SWEDEN'S tennis stars defeated Italy to win the Davis Cup in Milan 4-1 — the seventh time they have won the cup and the second year in succession. Jonas Bjorkman and Nicklas Kulti beat the Italian doubles pair of Diego Nargiso and Davide Sanguinetti 7-6, 6-1, 6-3. The victory added to wins in both of the opening singles matches earlier when Magnus Norman defeated Andrea Gaudenzi and Magnus Gustafsson thrashed Sanguinetti in straight sets to give Sweden a 3-0 lead. Gustafsson triumphed in the fourth while Nargiso grabbed Italy's consolation win.

THERE'S no room for blunder down under for sportmen and women taking part in the Sydney Olympic Games in 2000. If tested positive for drugs, they may be banned from competing on Australian soil under draconians laws introduced by the country's sports minister, Jackie Kelly, as part of the government's get tough campaign against the use of banned drugs in sport.

THE radical shake-up of English cricket took an enormous leap forward when the first-class counties voted overwhelmingly for a two-division championship. The split will be based on next season's performance with the top nine teams out of the 18 forming the First Division. After the end of every season there will be promotion and relegation for three teams in each division. There will also be changes in points system. A new contract system for Test players has also been "agreed in principle".

GIANT HAYSTACKS, the biggest and baddest of them all in Britain's golden era of television wrestling in the seventies, has died of cancer, age 52. At the peak of his wrestling glory, the 6ft 11in media monster — real name Martin Ruane — weighed 49 stone (310kg), and his fights often commanded an audience of up to 16 million.